

The Exhaustion of Progressive Aboriginal Governance

by

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Abstract

This thesis is a case study of the exhaustion of the progressive public policy approach to Aboriginal governance. Using poststructuralist and constructivist theory and interpretive ethnographic research methods, it finds that the progressive approach rests on notions of solidary culture, unitary identity and binary difference, and the cause of Aboriginal circumstances to be the oppressive power of the colonial and later Australian state, to which Aborigines have been innocently victim. The logic has been that the acknowledgement of particularity, provision of culturally-appropriate services and support for self-determination would facilitate a recovery of culture and self and thence enhanced capacity to engage in national society.

The thesis recognises the early usefulness of the approach but documents its contemporary exhaustion as Aboriginal political elites find it in their interests to elaborate the same notions and logic and impose on their constituents a restrictive regime of normative Aboriginality. It finds that contemporary Aboriginal Tasmanian and settler-Australian 'cultures' are ambiguously different and that Aborigines are subjectively multiple. Moreover, in their everyday lives they negotiate the small differences that distinguish them from other Australians and thus are able to be both Aborigines *and* citizens.

Contrarily, progressive Aboriginal governance, in schooling and other spheres, makes this demotic negotiation of dual consciousness more difficult to achieve. For their different governing ends, which inhere in having Aborigines choose *either* Aboriginality *or* citizenship, both the administrative state and Aboriginal politics manipulate a notional binary difference between a mythic Aboriginality and normal citizenship. Their interests align to press Aborigines into a certain particularity, apparently unable to grow beyond it without losing it, and making it difficult for them to also be participatory citizens.

This hegemonic discourse has many Aborigines perform a masquerade of the authorised Aboriginality and in that way problematise the capabilities to negotiate the complexities of being both Aboriginal and Australian that they otherwise employ in their everyday lives. This unnecessarily compromises their relationship with settler-Australia, contributing to a sense of alienation and poor educational and health outcomes. The thesis argues that it is the attempt to simplify actual

complexity that has led progressivism to become counter-productive in this way. It considers the national implications of these dynamics and argues that a better negotiation of the tensions between cultural particularity and citizenship relies on the acknowledgement by policy-makers of the interculturality, identity ambiguity, causal multi-dimensionality and agency of the objects of policy that are Aboriginal Australians' lived reality.

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Acronyms

AEW	Aboriginal Education Worker
APG	Aboriginal Provisional Government
ATAS	Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (now defunct)
ASSPA	Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness Program
ALCT	Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania (statutory body which owns and is responsible for Aboriginal lands, including Oyster Cove, Wybalenna and parts of Cape Barren Island)
BSI	Bass Strait Islands (community)
CAR	Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation
DD-B	Dolly Dalrymple-Briggs (community)
FC-S	Fanny Cochrane-Smith (community)
GoT	Government of Tasmania
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
IHEAC	Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council
RCIADIC	Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
TAC	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre
TALSC	Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council
TDoE	Tasmanian Department of Education
NAEP	National Aboriginal Education Policy
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Observance Committee
NIELNS	National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Scheme
OAA	Office of Aboriginal Affairs
SOSE	Studies of Society and the Environment
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Prefatory Notes

The thesis refers to a single Aboriginal Community that includes the entire Aboriginal population of the state. This Community has been imagined into being for political and administrative purposes, is now of use to Aboriginal political actors in their negotiation with the state and beginning to have a certain reality and reality effects. That notional Community is though, internally very divided, in part due to disparate historical roots, in part written histories that have authorised certain elements of the population and not others, in part the result of different responses to state categorisation and policy, and in part simply change over time, as people have integrated into the wider community. The single 'Community' is actually comprised of three foundational communities, each of which was founded in the colonial period.

The largest and most powerful of these foundational communities, that of the Bass Strait Islanders, is descended from the sealers and Aboriginal women who established a community in the eastern Islands of the Bass Strait. Some Bass Strait Islanders still live on Cape Barren and Flinders Islands, but are otherwise dispersed around the state and elsewhere. This community is referred to in the thesis as 'the core community'. The two other foundational communities are those established by Aboriginal women who were part of the remnant population in the nineteenth-century but married colonists and established independent families. Fanny Cochrane-Smith and her husband settled at Nichols Rivulet in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel area in the south-east of the state. Some of their descendants continue to live in the Channel and nearby Huon Valley area, while many live in the cities and towns of Tasmania and the Australian mainland. The third family and in time community was established by Dolly Dalrymple-Briggs and her husband at Latrobe, on the north-west coast of the state. Their descendants live in the surrounding area and elsewhere. These two communities are less powerful than the Islander community in the dynamics that are the subject of the thesis. The three are abbreviated in the thesis as on the preceding page.

The people of these three communities, and a number of others who are not affiliated with any of those communities, are officially defined as Aborigines. However, informally the Aboriginality of many is questioned, and their claims to fraternity with the Bass Strait Islanders denied by the Islanders in their role as

cultural and political gatekeepers. A small number of individuals from the DD-B and FC-S communities have managed to gain general (if not total, as will be seen) acceptance as Aborigines, and to take positions of significant political power within the core community and make significant contributions to the politics that is dominated by the Islanders. These individuals are part of an analytic category that is referred to in the thesis as the ‘core community *plus*’. The non-Islander members of this political elite achieve this distinction by their social participation and political activism and their negotiation of their somewhat liminal status. This contestation is a central part of the politics and is developed over the course of the thesis.

The thesis is based in part on data from semi-structured interviews, as listed in Appendix 1, where the name of interviewee and date of interview is included. In the text, these interviewees are referenced with the letters AS for Aboriginal student or AA for Aboriginal adult, and the date of interview. Though all interviewees are given names in the Appendix, only the more central are named in the text. With other references, such as observations of, or comments made by teachers or participants in activities in which I was involved, the relevant date is included in the text.

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Introduction

The 1990s saw official nation-wide enquiries into the contemporary and historical relationship between Aborigines and the nation-state, including the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCAIDIC 1992) and the *Bringing Them Home* report (Commonwealth of Australia 1997),¹ and the establishment of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) (see Gunston 2007). The decade also saw the Council of Australian Governments agree to action aimed at improving the efficacy of government services, through the *National Commitment to Improved Outcomes in the Delivery of Programs and Services for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders* (the National Commitment). In the mid-1990s, the Tasmanian Government Office of Aboriginal Affairs (OAA) conducted a research project under the auspices of the National Commitment which investigated the effectiveness of government services and sought to recommend improvements. A major aspect of the research was the conduct of a series of community forums and individual interviews around the state which explored Aboriginal perceptions of service provision in education, housing, youth justice and welfare services.

The consultations revealed (OAA n.d.: 19-26, 173-87) that many Aboriginal Tasmanians thought of themselves as being much the same as other Aborigines and very different from other Tasmanians. To them, they shared with other Aborigines the core of a unique culture, in terms for instance of lifestyle, supportive community and extended family, respect for and obligations to Elders, 'flat' social structure, use of Aboriginal English, a particular sense of humour and styles of interpersonal relations, parenting and learning.

The consultations also revealed (pp. 27-33) that they thought that government legislation, program design, administrative decision-making and delivery of

¹ The RCIADIC was established in 1987 to investigate the causes of a high rate and poor explanation for the deaths of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in police, prison and juvenile detention centre custody. The Commission reported in 2002; see Nagle and Summerell (2002). The National Inquiry that published the *Bringing Them Home* report examined the removal, by compulsion or under duress or undue influence, of indigenous children from their families. It established a direct connection between the removals and a number of Aboriginal social, cultural and psychological problems, considered the possibility of compensation and reparation and recommended policy changes according to the principle of self-determination. It was a vital factor in the push for the governmental apologies during the first decade of the twenty-first century.

service were ethnocentric and did not recognise or cater to their cultural difference, but imposed pressure to conform to standard regulations, resisted adaptation and were unjustly oppressive of them and their culture. They said that services pushed them to adopt non-Aboriginal ways and abandon their identity. They claimed for example, that the abstract nature of schooling was of little relevance to their children, that many teachers and classroom environments were racist and that education actively degrades their culture. They claimed similarly that housing did not cater for their larger, more mobile families and that welfare services judged Aboriginal families by inappropriate middle-class white standards.

The logic that accompanied these self-representations was that, along with the larger legacy of colonial dispossession, the history of ethnocentrism and alleged racism of government services explained the condition of marginality and disadvantage which they shared with other Aborigines. By imposing alien standards, services were both ineffective and damaging to cultural integrity. They were part of the constitution of Aboriginal marginality, and it was a matter of social justice that government services be modified to acknowledge, reflect and cater for their distinct culture, communal social structures and self. Furthermore, culturally appropriate curriculum and teaching would lead to improvements in educational attendance and attainment, and responsive housing would lead to better mental and physical health.

These perceptions of culture, community and self, difference, linear causal logic and claims on government were broadly validated by the findings of the earlier national enquiries and guided the activities of the bodies cited above. Much academic literature has contributed to these perceptions. Lyndall Ryan's (1996) definitive analysis of Aboriginal Tasmanian history for example, focuses almost exclusively on the Bass Strait Islanders and their descendants (see below), who articulate this narrative and ignores other Aboriginal Tasmanians. Ryan and others (O'Regan 1985; Pybus 2000; Breen 2001; Frost 2001; Hay 2003) have detailed the oppression and denial of an often valorised Aboriginality. Analyses complicating this apparent orthodoxy (see for example, Birmingham 1992a; McFarlane 2002, 2005, 2008) are in a minority. The Tasmanians have now gained official acceptance as Aborigines, though they are aware that that acceptance is popularly contested on the basis of their mixed racial heritage, ambiguous cultural

difference and the apparent material opportunism of their claimed cultural heritage.

The OAA policy report took the Aboriginal self-representations and logic at face value, arguing that the failure of services to accommodate cultural particularity contributed significantly to Aboriginal disadvantage, and recommending changes (n.d.: 97-123) to make those services more culturally appropriate. It suggested for instance, greater Aboriginal involvement in service design and delivery, adaptations which permitted housing services to cater for larger and more fluid family formations, and curriculum and pedagogy which catered for particular interests and learning preferences. A subsequent report by the same agency (OAA 2004) made similar assumptions of unmet cultural difference and again recommended undefined 'culturally appropriate' consultation, information provision, training and service delivery. Similar perceptions of Aboriginal culture and identity, logic of cause and models of accommodation are evident in much Tasmanian legislation, which has for example, transferred ownership and management of lands to Aboriginal organisations,² vested control of cultural heritage in Aboriginal organisations,³ granted concessions in the criminal justice system⁴ and minimised the impact of mutton-birding on welfare payments.⁵

Though this suggests that Aborigines believe in, and public policy operates on the basis of, a commonsensical categoric Aboriginal culture, imagined community and unitary self, an examination of official statistics, a review of the relevant research literature and the field research conducted for this thesis reveals a more complicated reality. Culture and community are actually neither entire, discrete or

² Aboriginal Lands Bill 1995, Aboriginal Lands Amendment (Wybalenna) Bill 1999 (No. 13), Aboriginal Lands Amendment Bill 1999 (No. 136), at <http://www.thelaw.tas.gov.au>

³ See Aboriginal Relics Act 1975 and discussion papers surrounding its review and the development of new legislation, at <http://www.tahl.tas.gov.au/ab>

⁴ The lungtalanana program is an alternative program operated on Aboriginal land for Aboriginal youth in detention (Mansell 2001a). Other adjustments to the justice system based on the same logic include the Meena Mienne program (Broughton 2005), Aboriginal community sentencing tribunals (Mansell 2001b) and a partnership agreement on family violence; see [http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/fasinternet.nsf/via/indigenous/\\$file/COAG_TAS.pdf](http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/fasinternet.nsf/via/indigenous/$file/COAG_TAS.pdf)

⁵ Anecdotally, the semi-official policy of the Tasmanian office of Centrelink is to treat mutton-birding as a cultural activity. This reduces the impact of that activity on welfare payments. When asked, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs said that they knew of the practice, but Centrelink were reluctant to confirm it.

markedly different, and the everyday lived reality is not of straightforward alienation and exclusion from the wider society. Rather, the administrative category is a device that conceptually unifies a highly dispersed population (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 1998) and several imagined and internally fragmented communities, whose members' lived realities are, as below, of social and cultural integration in the wider society, minor cultural differences and identity multiplicity, hybridity and ambiguity.

The administrative and political entity known as 'the Aboriginal community' emerged in the 1970s (Cove 1995; Ryan 1996: 251-89). Though it was then, and is now, dominated by the Bass Strait Islanders, it includes two other separately self-identifying communities, namely those of the Fanny Cochrane-Smith (FC-S) and Dolly Dalrymple-Briggs (DD-B) family lines. These three foundational communities trace their lineage back to Aboriginal Tasmanian women. Each is though, itself internally divided, comprised of a small fraction that lives a somewhat spatially-bounded and locally-referential community (as understood in the functionalist tradition; see Cohen 1989: 20-4) on Cape Barren Island, the D'Entrecasteau Channel/Huon Valley (FC-S) or Devonport/Ulverstone/Latrobe (DD-B) areas respectively, and a far larger cohort that lives urban lives dislocated to greater or lesser extent from the local. The former three cohorts live in the areas on which their predecessors settled (voluntarily and under pressure) at various times during the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries. Though family connections remain and movement between the urban and the local continues, the 'community' coheres to the extent that it does predominantly around memories of earlier times, the shared fact of resistance and sense of comradeship it generates, and thus comprises a symbolic or imagined community (Anderson 1991; Cohen 1989). There is also a number of people who identify as Aboriginal and/or claim Aboriginal heritage but whose family, experiential and/or imagined connection with these communities is so attenuated that they are not accepted as members. Some of this number, calling themselves the Lia Pootah people, have since the late 1990s claimed a home area and a fourth notional community.⁶

⁶ See <http://www.tasmanianaboriginal.com.au/liapootah/index.htm>.

The state-wide Aboriginal community is then, a political construct imagined into being, as Attwood (1992a) has argued nationally, for administrative purposes and in response to the kind of political agitation described above. It does not constitute a single community, other than for those purposes and Aboriginal political claim, despite the boundary marking process against settler Tasmania. Instead, on the basis of their energetic claim to elements regarded by government and public as defining characteristics of Aboriginality—evident descent from pre-contact Aborigines and a kin-based community and historic discrimination at the hands of the state—it is the Bass Strait Islanders who have dominated an internal hierarchy of authenticity. They have dominated the political movement since its inception, as is evidenced by the near invisibility of the other branches of the population in Ryan's (1996) definitive history (see also Friend 1992). Led by an educated elite, which includes some socially and politically active members of the other foundational communities, they have marginalised other communities, whose Aboriginality they regard as less or inauthentic. As the media of the period 2000-2004⁷ attest, this is extended with particular vigour to the Lia Pootah people, who are publicly denigrated as self-serving imposters.

Unlike many Aborigines in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia (ABS 1999a: 23 and *passim*), and despite protestations otherwise, Aboriginal Tasmanians are deeply enmeshed in close and long standing relationships with the wider community, the administrative structures of the nation-state and global cultural flows. While they increasingly identify as Aborigines (ABS 1999a: 49) in the ways suggested above, they also live in the mixed suburbs of the main cities and towns (ABS 1998: 8; ABS 2008: 20), as partners to settler-Australian spouses and parents to their children (ABS: 1999a: 45-48; see also Birrell 2000; Gardiner and Bourke 2000; Birrell and Hirst 2002). They are then, in-laws, neighbours and childhood friends to settler-Australians. Employed in a full range of occupations (ABS 2007: Table I32), they also form friendships and negotiate relations with workmates and colleagues. They socialise with, speak the same language as (ABS 2007: Table I06), and consume the same mediated culture as other Tasmanians. They contribute to community

⁷ See *The Saturday Mercury* 19/10/02: 7; *Pakana news* 53 (2), 2002; ABC TV *Four Corners* 26/08/02, ABC TV *7.30 Report* 21/08/02. This issue is considered in more depth in Chapter Five.

organisations (which may or may not be Aboriginal) (ABS 2007: Table I14) and serve in the armed forces. As others, they may also be say, single parents, homosexual, disabled, members of professional associations and/or sporting clubs, and identify with the concerns of those groups, which intersect, at times contradict and inevitably inflect their Aboriginality. As they must, they negotiate these intersections.

Data from the ABS confirm the greater complexity of the material reality than that of the narrative, particularly in Tasmania. Census data reveal that, while there exists a gap between Aboriginal and other Tasmanians on many indicators of social status, health and well-being, including rates of live births (ABS 1998: 5), attainment of non-school qualifications (ABS 2007: Table I27), labour force participation and unemployment (ABS 2004: 8; ABS 2007: Table I27), and level of overcrowding at home (ABS 1998: 18), the gap is in many cases minimal and invariably less than that in other jurisdictions. Even where the gap is substantial, as in home ownership (ABS 1998: 19) or educational attainment, it is significantly less than the equivalent gap in other states, and particularly in northern Australia. For instance, in 2006, 53% of indigenous households in Tasmania owned or were buying their home compared to 72% of other households, but the equivalent national figures were 34% and 69% respectively (ABS 2007: Table I18).

These data suggest that though Aboriginal Tasmanians suffer a degree of disadvantage, that disadvantage is less than that experienced by Aborigines nationally, and particularly than those in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. A greater proportion of the Aboriginal Tasmanian population is tertiary educated, employed in other than lower skilled work, and live in less crowded housing than Aborigines nationally. In fact, on some measures and at some times, such as median household income and number of vehicles per household, Aboriginal Tasmanians exceed other Tasmanians (ABS 1998: 14, 18; ABS 1999b: 11). In these data collections also, there is little evidence of the marked social and cultural difference that was asserted in the consultations discussed above. Aboriginal Tasmanians overwhelmingly speak English as a first language and live in families whose median size is only marginally greater than those of other Tasmanians (ABS 1998: 17).

Though not on its own conclusive, this is evidence of actual integration in the majority society and dominant culture. It implies not that the Tasmanians' Aboriginality is lost or compromised but that they are differently-Aboriginal Aborigines. Similarly, it is not intended to suggest an absence of disadvantage through ethnocentrism or racism. It is though, of immense importance to an understanding of them and their circumstances, in that it suggests that most can be expected to have incorporated the ways of living and come to intersubjectively share the ways of thinking and valuing of their settler Australian intimates and compatriots, and to therefore experience settler Australia not as other but as indigenous. It also suggests that Aboriginal Tasmanian individuals can negotiate with some success the differences which they believe irrevocably marginalise them, challenge their sense of self and which should by rights be supported and nurtured. Yet the discourse of radical difference, unitary identity and inappropriate treatment causing disadvantage—prominent in the OAA policy research, in national inquiries like those above, academic literature and the research conducted for this thesis—refuses, obfuscates and contradicts these data and any suggestion of the implications.

That refusal constitutes a double disjuncture. The first disjuncture is that between the imagined, professed and felt cultural and communal sameness and the lived heterogeneity. The second is that between the imagined, professed and felt radical difference from settler Australia and the actual ambiguity of difference from settler Australia. These complementary disjunctures are at the heart of an Aboriginal Tasmanian problematic that is the focus of this research project. That problematic includes but is far more than the reality of socio-economic and cultural marginalisation. It is more importantly the unacknowledged peculiar combination of a highly assertive yet fragile certainty, an internally- and externally-directed anger, and an angst over perceived threats to, and cynicism regarding, their Aboriginality. This problematic troubles the individuals involved in a great many ways, one of which is to produce a sense of alienation from the wider society within which they are nevertheless simultaneously integrated.

The puzzle which animates this research is the extent to which the problematic is imposed from without on a hapless if resistant people, as the Aboriginal contributors to the OAA policy research above suggested, or is

generated by the people themselves in their negotiation of the relationship and their own actually changing cultures and identities. The possibility which the Aboriginal demotic and the disjunctures above hint at, and that this research explores in depth, is that the problematic is in part caused by that negotiation itself, specifically the attempt to imagine into being a too-simple culture and identity, a too-neat difference and a too-easily unidirectional logic of causation. The project seeks to articulate this Aboriginal problematic, to untangle its complex causes, and to conceive a more refined governmental approach to it.

The sociological interest of the Aboriginal problematic

The research literature relevant to this Aboriginal problematic, reviewed in Chapter One of this thesis, reveals that the Tasmanians' self-representations, logic and claims are, in locally variant configurations, consistent with those of Aborigines nationally and indigenous peoples globally, and are therefore of policy concern to provincial and national governments. A great many indigenous groups are engaged in a similar politics of renewal, seeking to have their cultural specificity and unitary identity acknowledged, and embracing a similar logic in regards to national governments' obligations, even as they simultaneously integrate in the encompassing society and as their cultures intersect with and incorporate aspects of others, and change accordingly. Australian governments have responded to the idealised Aborigine and the logic of causation by moderating national public policy and programs in ways similar to those of Tasmanian governments. In this, the Tasmanians', Australian Aborigines' and other indigenous peoples' troubles, and the governmental difficulties with which they are associated, represent an issue of profound sociological interest of national and global scale.

Both personal troubles and governmental difficulties spring from the turbulent intersection of social forces which surround the long run Enlightenment concern with social and political emancipation and the imperative of extending individual and collective rights and genuine equality to all sectors of society. This political imperative, driven in part by the categories and groups concerned, has continued since the extension of rights to women and the propertyless, with heightened

urgency in the post-Second World War period of decolonisation, to religious, migrant, homosexual and other sexed, disabled and indigenous minorities.

This imperative runs up against the equally urgent political imperative of governing the pluralistic societies which result. In a world of economic and cultural globalisation (Waters 1995), postmodernisation (Crook *et al.* 1992) and hetero- and poly-glossia (Bakhtin 1981), all national societies and administrative states, particularly those of the constitutional democracies of the West (and settler dominions, that is USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia), are confronted by the difficulties of managing these twin liberal political imperatives of emancipation and government. They pose what has become for the governance of liberal nation states a core dilemma: that of reconciling the universal and the particular, cultural pluralism and national social cohesiveness, and individual and collective rights.

This dilemma is now of governmental, political and theoretical concern globally, as culturally plural nations struggle to accommodate internal heterogeneity, communitarian separatism and fundamentalism which crosses national boundaries. From the perspective of the minority groups themselves the dilemma appears as the difficulty of maintaining their cultural particularity and difference from the majority population at the same time as they come to adopt majority values and become equal citizens in the wider society. At the level of the individual the dilemma manifests as problems of the self.

The dynamics associated with this intersection and attempted resolution have been subject to a great deal of scholarly attention; from studies of the postcolonial condition by Frantz Fanon (1967, 1986), Edward Said (1979, 1993), Albert Memmi (1965, 1973), Homi Bhabha (1994) and Gyatri Chakravorty Spivak (1985, 1988); of cultural pluralism by Stuart Hall (1991a, 1991b), Gerd Baumann (1996, 1997) and Amartya Sen (2006); and of the political dynamics of the multicultural accommodation by Will Kymlicka (1989, 1995), Charles Taylor (1989, 1994) and Clauss Offe (1998). The consequences for the self have been studied by Anthony Giddens (1991) and Zigmunt Bauman (1992), amongst others. Michel Foucault's (1979a, 1979b) contribution was to argue that liberal forms of government have sought to reconcile the tensions of plurality by discursively constituting the members of anomalous, deviant, non-normal populations as self-regulating

citizen-subjects. For him, categorisation and typification were central in this process.

The review of the research literature relevant to these fields conducted in Chapter One—Particularity, Public Policy and Complexity—suggests that the progressivist approach to the government of Aborigines, adopted since the late 1960s and based on recognition of cultural particularity and associated collective rights, is consistent with the liberal approach and widely adopted in Western settler dominions. That review also suggests, however, that the attempt to gain control of, or impose order on, the routine messiness of lived reality in the ways theorised by Foucault has become less tenable as indigenous cultures have come to be more intersected by, and intertwined with, others, and as individuals have come to identify with a great deal more than their unitarily conceived Aboriginal community, culture and self.

The literature refines the picture of the Aboriginal problematic, suggesting that it is a product of a dialectical relationship between liberal scholarship, progressive public policy and Aboriginal activism, which has adopted conceptions of culture as a given entity, of identity as unitary, and of passive innocence and linear cause of marginalisation. Those conceptions are hegemonic and as a result the actual complexities of cultural hybridity and identity multiplicity, fluidity and ambiguity, so critical to an understanding of contemporary realities, are under-examined and not well understood. Similarly, the complexity of ‘non-linear relations, multiple and contingent causation’ (Byrne 1998: 5), including reflexive Aboriginal agency as one of the incessantly interactive variables, is under-examined and not well understood. The administrative and political disregard for, and misunderstanding of, this complexity makes Aboriginality problematic for Aborigines themselves and the nation.

Conception of the project

The dynamics of culture, identity and subjectivity above, on the one hand, and policy, politics and government on the other, constitute contemporary Aborigines’ social, cultural, economic and political setting. Following Tiryakian’s (1962: 3) comment that ‘to consider man apart from his social setting is to leave a gap in all philosophical generalisations concerning man and human knowledge’, and

desiring to come to some generalisations regarding the Aboriginal problematic, this study engages with the complexity of these variables, dynamics and consequences.

The project therefore considers contemporary Aboriginal Tasmanians not simply as Aborigines, nor does it abstract them from their several local, Tasmanian and national communities and global flows, but instead considers them as part of ‘complex nested systems [and a] two-way system of determinant inter-relationships among the levels’ (Byrne 1998: 10) of those communities and cultures. It allows for the perception that they share a great deal with others in those communities. The study initially examines the relationship between settler Australia and Aborigines in schooling, but because of the interconnectedness of education and other institutions and wider discourses and policies, extends that examination to Aboriginal affairs nationally. Through its use of a Foucauldian conception of discourse as practice (1972, 1977a) it includes in this examination the historical dimension and thus layered depth of the discourses which shape Aborigines.

Chapter Two—The Ambiguous Subaltern Self—outlines a theoretical framework appropriate to these complexities. As in the field of ‘practice theory’ (Ortner 2006: 1-18), the framework seeks to reconcile the opposition between structure and agency. It recognises the macro-level structures that constrain individuals, the practices that self-interested individuals adopt in negotiating them (at the meso or collective political level, and the micro or interactional level), and the dialectical interaction between structure and practice. At the core of the framework is the notion that it is the constant interactivity of these elements that generates social realities, such as the Aboriginal problematic introduced above.

Through Foucault (1979b) the framework is sensitive to dominant and resistant discursive structures, and through Goffman (1969a) and Butler (1999) to the individual negotiation and revision of those structures in social interaction. Through poststructuralist cultural and later postcolonial theorising (Bhabha 1994; Derrida 1978, 1982; Fanon 1967, 1986; Hall 1987, 1988, 1991b; Said 1985, 1993; Spivak 1985, 1989), the framework is sensitive to the mobilisation of culture as political resource and to cultural and identity multiplicity, hybridity and ambiguity.

Chapter Three—Coming to Know the Masquerade—outlines a methodology capable of apprehending complexity. Derived from Foucault's (see Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982) 'analytics of practice' and Denzin's (1989) interpretive interactionism, the approach is to thematically and semiotically analyse the discourses of progressive public policy and identity politics and individuals' negotiation of those discourses. Data are developed ethnographically, that is from close observation, textual sources and semi-structured and unstructured interviews.

Each discourse is examined as it manifests at different levels of abstraction from the interpersonal, from interaction to policy and rhetoric, and those discourses are compared to uncover hidden structures (allusions, oppositions, silences and the like). The relationship between the discourses is examined to establish shared and discrepant constructions of Aboriginal authenticity. Separately, individuals' rhetorical representation of their Aboriginality and their Aboriginality as they actually live it are compared. Most enlightening are data gained from following individuals through multiple social encounters. This move reveals both the positioning power of discursive structures and individuals' more or less skilful negotiation of that positioning, including their exploitation of the ambiguities of meaning as they move between contexts. Some reactions replicate and reinforce, while others trouble the structural positioning, but all influence it. Triangulation across the data sets reveals the multiple layers of coexistent meaning within which Aborigines live, and the contribution made by their interpretive practices to the difficult reality that emerges, unbidden and beyond intention.

Structure of the thesis

With these conceptual tools the thesis aims to excavate the dynamics of governance and the personal troubles which make contemporary Aboriginality problematic. The thesis finds that the dynamics released by the progressive public policy approach to the dilemmas of liberal governance have become unexpectedly counterproductive for the nation and for Aborigines themselves. That approach and the dynamics it releases refashion Aborigines' quotidian and evidently manageable human complexity as problematic and burdensome. The approach and

associated dynamics do so by taking for granted and privileging in institutional discourse a too-simple victimised Aboriginal Other and ignoring the cultural intersection, subjective multiplicity and multi-causality of the Aboriginal condition, which includes reflexive Aboriginal agency as individuals interact with policy, programs, staff and each other. The initial policy discourse triggers an exceptionalist Aboriginal politics based on a sacrosanct culture. In order to maximise their leverage with the state, Aboriginal political elites respond by elaborating the minor differences which distinguish Aborigines from others, thus bolstering the ideal type, and then pressing their constituencies to perform it. The pressures convince individuals to live a masquerade of supposedly authentic, but merely an ideal-typical Aboriginality of difference, resistance, alienation and victimhood, and has them compromise the capabilities to live with and across difference they otherwise demonstrably have. Thus, the progressive public policy approach establishes conditions which lead to the diminution of the capacity of the nation to include Aborigines as engaged citizens within a cohesive national society. That is, it releases dynamics which limit the nation's capacity to further develop the already demotically evident differentiated citizenships demanded by pluralist democratic society. These are the social costs of the orthodox liberal governing attempt to gain control of unruly complexity through the processes of normalising subjection.

The dynamics associated with the progressive approach are also counter-productive for Aborigines themselves, in terms of their capacity to see themselves, and gain social acceptance as, both genuinely Aboriginal and equally Australian citizens. By inducing individuals to, at one level of consciousness and existence, limit their capabilities to live across their differences with others, and so to realise their full subjectivities, the approach makes it difficult for them to move beyond the stereotypical Other to also be modern equal citizens without, so they are taught to fear, abandoning their indigenous identity. The dynamics have Aborigines self-marginalise and makes their Aboriginality a burden to them. The dynamics actually more *produce* than reconcile the tensions of difference which attend but need not dominate social pluralism. These are the individual costs of the orthodox liberal governing attempt to gain control of unruly complexity.

Progressive imagination and practice then, driven by the abiding governmental concern for conceptual and administrative control of the messy ambiguities of Aboriginality, establishes conditions of which the political elites of the category thus imagined into being take advantage. This was initially to the socio-cultural, political and material advantage of Aborigines, but in the struggle to retain that advantage as the dynamics evolve and circumstances change, the politics has become externally extremist (that is, in respect of the settler Australian and Western worlds) and internally disciplinary in order to maintain the masquerade. The political elite is seduced into contributing to Aboriginal self-marginalisation. But it is the progressive public policy attempt to corral the full human complexity of Aboriginality within category and stereotype that sets the conditions under which this new complexity, more problematic than that which governments originally sought to bring under control, is generated.

As the discussion of the OAA cases above intimates, the pivotal dimension of this problematic is the dissonance between the lived reality of integration and the imagined reality discursively constituted by progressive public policy and Aboriginal politics. The imagined reality becomes real, overlays and infiltrates the former, and produces a confusing ‘lop-sidedness’ between itself and the reality experienced in daily social interactions. It is the efforts of government and Aboriginal interests to have their different ends prevail which produces the disjuncture and in turn induces obfuscation, deception and self-marginalising masquerade. Thus Aboriginal agency contributes to the very marginalisation which it blames solely on the legacy of colonial dispossession and settler racism and ethnocentrism.

The thesis reaches these conclusions on the basis of the empirical literature and the findings presented in the four ‘results’ chapters that succeed this chapter, interpreted in the light of the conceptual framework above. Chapter Four—Liberal Governing Subjection—outlines the normalising dynamics which occur routinely in mainstream schooling in Tasmania, in which Aboriginal students from diverse backgrounds, with diverse and multiply intersected attachments to Aboriginality, are routinely subjected through a subtle but insistent mix of normalising inclusion and naïve positive discrimination. They are subjected by their categorisation and immersion in pedagogy, curricula and personal treatment all specially adapted to

be ‘culturally appropriate’ to the ideal typical Aboriginality. They are subjected by the juxtapositioning of this with routine exposure to valorised models of normal Australianness and the commonplace positing of the loss of Aboriginality with urbanisation and social inclusion.

Each of these idealised subject positions—the authentic Aboriginal and the good Australian citizen—is promulgated as totalising, oppositional to, and exclusive of, the other, and their juxtapositioning has the effect of proposing a conditional choice between *either* social inclusion as equal but less authentically Aboriginal citizens, *or* social acceptance as authentic Aborigines but therefore subaltern citizens. The relativities of status, power and prospective consequences act to promote the choice of normality. This is neither institutional racism, nor ethnocentrism nor assimilation, but a mostly well-intentioned albeit naïvely-conceived progressive attempt to recognise and support cultural and identity particularity.

Schooling thus establishes structural conditions conducive to notions of solidary culture, unitary identity and difference, and presents opportunities for political leverage of which Aboriginal political entrepreneurs take full advantage. Chapter Five—Aboriginal Governing Subjection—explores the ways in which Aboriginal political discourse in schooling and other institutions such as policing, welfare and housing, in Tasmanian contexts and consistent with national equivalents, works in a dialectic of incitation and response to progressive public policy, program and practice to elaborate those notions. Progressive policy authorises an Aboriginal political elite whose members have the skills to rhetorically assert remnant cultural practices, invent tradition, create links with antecedents and otherwise establish cultural credentials, that is, to discursively constitute a culture, community and self that match those of the governing imagination. These entrepreneurs strategically overlook their own and their constituencies’ cultural integration and intra-communal and individual differences to establish a seemingly shared history, intergenerational culture, group homogeneity and individual unity. Part of this process of reinvention is to exaggerate the oppositionality of the white Other. The result is an exaggeration of the ideal typical Aboriginality/Aborigine.

The logic of this is to establish the loss of originary cultural and political self-sufficiency as the critical factor in contemporary social difficulties, to explain this in terms of colonial and later national racist and/or ethnocentric institutions and to claim that recovery of social and cultural health depends on reconstruction through political self-determination. In schooling, that discourse claims culturally-specific proclivities, capacities, learning styles and needs, and that the educational success of Aboriginal students depends upon commensurate curricular, pedagogical and administrative change.

This politics has significant influence in education, other national institutions and the mediated public sphere, where it is similarly directed externally at gaining political concessions on the basis of the constructed difference and internally at enrolling individuals in performative support of the ideal, that is, to express their cultural difference and subalternity. In pursuit of Aboriginal governing ends then, the politics embellishes, elaborates and exaggerates the ideal type generated by progressive discourse, namely the solidary culture, unitary self, binary difference, victimhood and subalternity. It proposes the linear logic of external causation, and the primacy of cultural recovery to well-being, empowerment and capacity. It proposes a choice on essentially the same terms as the state, between two falsely monolithic and dichotomous subject positions, though the intent is to have individuals choose loyalty, affiliation and fealty to group, community and culture, rather than to the nation-state. Ultimately it reinforces the invisibility of complexity and therefore its constitution as problematic.

Thus the relationship, apparently one of confrontation in which Aboriginal spokespersons and peak organisations represent the interests of their disempowered constituency to a recalcitrant state administration, is as much one of covert broad conceptual agreement and mutual governing convenience. The combination constructs a reality which problematises the lived reality and imposes wearing material consequences for Aborigines. The relationship produces powerful contradictory centrifugal and centripetal forces, which act to impel Aborigines entangled in them in opposite directions, the one to normalisation, the other to essentialist differentiation. Chapter Six—The Burden of Aboriginality for Aborigines—considers this dialectic and its problematic consequences.

Necessarily, Aboriginal Tasmanians must live their everyday lives across difference, as spouses, friends, neighbours, work colleagues and the like, simply as participants in the national society and culture. But they also find it natural to identify with the authoritatively imagined Aboriginality. Ultimately, as it is instantiated in resistance or alienation, the latter begins to create its own reality of difference and marginality, which comes to be taken as natural and thence to overlay, infiltrate and detract from the possibility of the lived reality. The outcomes convince and confuse individuals sufficiently to have them surrender a measure of their capabilities for full human functioning in order to more effectively perform the ideal typical Aboriginality.

Nevertheless, the everyday reality of cultural intersection and compromise of their Aboriginal subjectivity as it jostles for influence amongst their myriad others, continues, and wherever those other subjectivities and compromises become visible beneath the masquerade they comprise a threat to the political project. Evidence that their Aboriginality is not absolute threatens to expose the simulated culture and self and with it the political leverage. The political activists protect their investment in the simulation by demands for more disciplined performance of the desired Aboriginality and more effective obfuscation of the dissonant lived reality. Denigration, stigmatisation and social marginalisation secure the performance of simplicity, uni-dimensionality and ultimately disengagement, marginalisation and alienation.

Individuals are caught in the unenviable 'third space' created by this intersection of their everyday realities of mixedness and the hegemonic discourse of difference and externally-caused subalternity. The attempt made by many to maintain their actual lives with the handicap of this subterfuge is highly demanding. The negotiation of the discrepancies immerses them in a sapping double life. Otherwise they resolve the dilemmas posed by the third space in counter-productive ways: students may begin for instance, to imagine that their schooling does not accord with their preference for concrete experience or other learning preferences, and so limit their engagement. Adults may limit their participation in public political discussion or constrain their choice of work to certain fields they consider appropriate. Even those who successfully negotiate the balancing act of performing the masquerade *and* living their complexity

perpetuate by thus performing, the ideal type, lop-sided reality and the associated dilemmas. These are the dynamics which produce tensions sometimes thought to be the product of rootless multiplicity and feckless hybridity.

Where Chapter Six considers the many individuals for whom the dominant discourse prevails, Chapter Seven—Old Aboriginality, New Aboriginalities—considers a smaller number who are similarly impacted by the discourse but eschew performative adherence to it in favour of realising their complex post-identity Aboriginalities. These individuals deploy their capabilities to negotiate the structural pressures antagonistic to the easy navigation of subjective complexity, in order to pursue their full subjective, social and cultural complexity.

This is post-identity Aboriginality, in which individuals identify with but also beyond the limits of the ideal typical Aboriginality. They resist the social pressures to conform to expectations to be *either* authentic Aborigines *or* good Australians, and instead freely identify with people, groups, activities, opinions and projects which are allegedly non-, un- or anti-Aboriginal. They do not thereby abandon or compromise their Aboriginality, but are comfortable with a hybridising, ‘changing same’ and constantly becoming Aboriginality and with their own as one of innumerable different Aboriginalities. Though considerable energy is needed to negotiate the difficulties of this stance, they expend it, and in doing so contribute to the continuity and growth of Aboriginality. These are strong Aborigines and powerful Aboriginalities. They refuse the easy course of essentialist separatism, externalisation of responsibility and performative victimhood offered them by progressive policy and identity politics. Instead, they recognise the complexities that are exposed in this research and successfully negotiate the dilemmas those complexities pose. And with greater or lesser conscious intent, they do so in ways that unsettle the structures which press many to take the easy but counter-productive other course.

The concluding chapter—Accommodating Post-Identity Aboriginalities—brings together the threads of this analysis of the governmental constitution of the Aboriginal problematic. It summarises the socio-cultural dynamics that burden many Aborigines, which a small number manipulate to their own advantage and another minority manage in ways that contest and destabilise the dynamics. That summary makes available a more refined understanding of Aboriginality and the

dynamics which produce the social and personal costs of being Aboriginal, than has hitherto been available. It establishes that the Aboriginal problematic is the product not simply of cultural difference, dispossession, racism and ethnocentrism, as the hegemonic discourse has it, but also of Aboriginal agency in the form of the manipulation and performative resistance above. It establishes instead, the urgent need to incorporate cultural intersection, identity multiplicity and multi-causality into analyses of, and responses to, the Aboriginal condition.

These understandings can contribute significantly to the destabilisation of the hegemony that currently stymies Aboriginal advancement toward post-identity Aboriginalities and hence, in that liberated condition, toward socio-economic, cultural and subjective well-being. The complexities and the difficulties of response may lead some to abandon belief in reason as the base of social change (see Bookchin 1995: 172-77). But, as Byrne (1998: 7) argues, an approach informed by complexity is actually ‘part of the realist program of scientific understanding and inquiry’ insofar as those social factors can be tracked, modelled and responded to in more informed ways. Having tracked those social factors (which complement others’ recognition of complexity, see for example, Sutton 2005; Nakata 2007: 195-212; Pearson 2008a), and aware of reflexive agency and interactivity, this research cannot suggest any specific alternative approach. It *can* however, suggest some key principles of a more sophisticated reconciliation of the governing dilemma, aimed at diminishing the Aboriginal problematic.

The chapter and thesis thus conclude with an outline of those principles and discussion of their potential to breach the impasse created by the enduring investment in the orthodoxy that is evident in the scholarly work, policy settings, programs and delivery practices considered in the thesis, along with some recent innovations in other administrative fields. The principles propose that public policy be re-oriented to complement the emphasis on known difference with enhanced sensitivity to ambiguity, the cultural clone with human individuality, the passive victim with active agency, the generic Aboriginality with the locally-specific, and particularistic rights with civic responsibilities. These principles constitute a retreat from the government of Aborigines through grossly understood cultural difference and attached rights, but they do not abandon the concern for cultural difference when conceived in its complexity. They aim to undermine

those structures that limit individuals' post-identity capabilities to live as Aborigines and simultaneously live across their differences as participatory citizens.

Chapter 1 Particularity, Public Policy and Complexity

Introduction

Two bodies of research literature are relevant to the problematic relationship of Aboriginal Tasmanians and the liberal state: one examines Aboriginality and the other the liberal governance of cultural pluralism. This chapter brings them together and in doing so reveals the existence of an imagined internal Aboriginal sameness of culture and identity and a radical difference from other Australians. It reveals that that imagined internal sameness and external difference overlays a lived reality of cultural and subjective intersection, ambiguity and hybridity, and that the contradiction constitutes a highly problematic complexity. In each, research verges on explaining the complexity but is obstructed by a dialectic of policy discourse and identity politics that sustains the imagined reality. A third body of literature—indigenous education—reaches a similar point of near understanding of complexity and the relevance of liberal policy to it. This point of looming understanding is the point from which the project departs, and at which it seeks to make a contribution.

The first section of this chapter examines research into the culture and identity of Aboriginal Australians, focusing on understandings which emerged from the 1980s. It reveals a gradual and contested move towards revelation of an increasing asymmetry of realities: an imagined reality of primordial otherness, wholeness and unitariness that is more authoritative than, and prevails over, a lived reality of multiplicity, mixedness and ambiguity. While much progressive scholarship has supported a politics of identity and sustained this imagined reality, some research has explored the lived reality and sought to understand the complexities produced by the discrepancy between the two. Scholarly analyses of the mixed race and culture of postcolonial migrants resident in the metropole for several generations reveals a similar disjuncture between proclaimed and lived culture and identity. In their case though, scholarship has engaged with the lived cultural and subjective reality and worked to understand the differences between the lived and imagined realities and to undermine the asymmetry between them. Juxtaposition of the postcolonial migrant and Aboriginal situations throws the latter into sharp relief and confirms a problematic ‘upside downness’ or ‘lop-sidedness’ (Hage 2003: xi)

of realities, in which the more authoritative imagined reality dominates those that continue to be lived, though submerged beneath the discursive.

The second section reveals the provenance of this problematic complexity in the conditions of possibility provided by the communitarian thinking of progressivist public policy which has been 'in the ascendancy over the last few decades' (Sen 2006: 33). In this period, policy, program and practice have 'drift[ed] to [a] particularism' (Vincent 2002: 1) predicated on the conveniently knowable orthodox culture, group and subject imagined and desired by administrators, scholars and activists. In this they have glossed lived realities and institutionalised the imagined reality and thus the lop-sidedness and problematic consequences. Though there is critique of this drift and moves to address it, reform is hampered by the institutionalised investment in particularism and universalist individualism that ensures that neither the more communitarian approach nor more egalitarian reform proposals engage with the full extent of Aboriginal complexity, but contribute to the perpetuation of its constitution as problematic. The section ends with a critical review of the few attempts to acknowledge and accommodate the simultaneous group membership and national citizenship of Aborigines.

A review of research in the final section of the chapter reveals schooling as an exemplary site of the production, accommodation and elaboration of imaginary difference and problematic complexity in the dialectic of scholarship, public policy and Aboriginal activism. Again, some scholars conceptualise cultural and identity complexity and try to develop curriculum and pedagogy appropriate to it.

Aboriginal particularity: culture, identity and identity politics

The scholarly consideration of post-contact Aboriginal culture and identity is dominated by an orthodox narrative of immanence and 'disempowerment, marginalisation and dispossession' (Tyler 1993: 323). This orthodoxy endures, even as Aborigines have integrated within the wider society, that society has globalised, as new theoretical tools have developed and new Aboriginalities and understandings of Aboriginality have evolved. The pattern apparent in the literature is of an increasing divergence between the orthodox and various heterodox notions of Aboriginality as the latter emerge from constructivist,

poststructuralist and postmodernist research. The greater the divergence of these new understandings from the orthodoxy, the more fanciful and detached from lived experience becomes the orthodox Aboriginality.

The orthodox narrative of Aboriginality

Colonial perceptions of culture, shaped by social evolutionary thinking, later structural-functionalist anthropology (see Spencer and Gillen 1899; Elkin 1932, 1934, 1935, 1938; Radcliffe-Brown 1930; Strehlow 1947; Berndt and Berndt 1964) and complemented by the ‘othering’ processes of identity building (Attwood 1992a: iii-vi), established enduring tropes of Aboriginality. Authentic “‘Aboriginal culture’ has been that which existed prior to 1788’ (Creamer 1988: 46). ‘Classical’ (Sutton 2001) or ideal typical (Tatz 1982) Aboriginality has, even when not made explicit, implied isolated, tightly integrated cultural units, suffused with value consensus, bound together by shared norms and governed by “‘the customs and rules of the ancient native code’ ... body of religious knowledge or ‘Law’” and patriarchal authority structures (Rowse 1992: 93; see also Maddock 1984). It has been conceived as existing outside history, especially in terms of ceremonial practices, kinship systems and language.

In the pejorative version of this master narrative, Aborigines are racially inferior (McConnochie *et al.* 1989; see Smith 1984: 162), basely savage (Lattas 1987), ‘morally unreclaimable, representative of an animality totally outside any discursive gaze, devoid of the rational spark which could have included them in the emerging domain of the bourgeois democratic state’ (Tyler 1994: 9). In the ‘noble savage syndrome’ (Jacobs 1988: 32), they are romantic exotica (Chase 1981), the universal originary human (Lattas 1990, 1992a) living in harmony with the environment and each other, and though primitive, reformable (Lattas 1987: 53). In both, Aboriginality is irretrievable ‘otherness’ (Muecke 1982), existing in binary opposition to settler Australia (Attwood 1992a: xi).

The official construction of Aboriginality has been, ‘since the 1940s ... framed in terms of proximity to a narrow and static concept of “traditional” culture’ (Hollinsworth 1992a: 138), which has meant that it has also been thought highly vulnerable to a ‘one way process of collapse’ (Cowlshaw 1992: 25). Any change in cultural practices is equated with cultural loss. Aborigines’ social

disorganisation, marginality and 'common structural location in Australian society defined in terms of a uniform experience of historical dispossession, cultural loss and socio-economic discrimination' (Tyler 1993: 327), are taken for granted aspects of Aboriginality. Historians like Reynolds (1981) and Ryan (1996) though, have established the fact of Aboriginal resistance in the face of formidable challenges, and their survival and cultural persistence. Keeffe (1988: 68) identified the latter as one a dominant theme of Aboriginal discourse on Aboriginality.

This master discourse proposes a deeply primordialist Aboriginality (see Geertz 1967; Issacs 1975; Stack 1986). The main themes of primitivism, romanticism, authenticity, destruction, loss and survival are rooted in naturalistic conceptions of cultures as self-contained, highly integrated 'complex wholes', invariable totalities exactly appropriate to the people and their locale, which guide the members' actions on the basis of immanent 'customary behaviour, institutions and artefacts' (Ingold 1994: 329; also see Keesing 1974; Baumann 1996: 11-13; Wicker 1997: 31-8; Kuper 1999). These understandings have been powerfully explanatory in the social sciences (Wicker 1997), but with them have gone a bedevilling binarism. The perspective which made the ideal type for instance, meant that a great many non-traditional 'part'-Aborigines of mixed descent, living contemporary (Morton 1998: 358, note 3) lives in 'settled Australia' (Rowley 1972b: 377), have been regarded as culture-less, 'essentially non-Aboriginal' or lost between the Aboriginal and white worlds (see Elkin 1935; Barwick 1964; Bell 1964; Rowley 1972b; Eckermann 1977; Langton 1981; Tatz 1982: 10; Jordan 1985; Creamer 1988). With their culture disappearing (Cowlshaw 1992: 23), they were seen to share only an oppositional anti-white culture and to be inevitably on a path to Europeanisation (Berndt 1979: 87).

Constructionist understandings of Aboriginality

The orthodox discourse above has dominated the perceptions of scholars, legislators, administrators, the wider public and Aborigines themselves. It, and the attitudes that flow from it, are 'ingrained' (Jacobs 1988: 32), and have persisted, even as research undertaken within different research traditions,¹ in response to

¹ Phenomenological and post-structuralist research is explained further in Chapters Two and Three.

the revelation of the racism and violence of the frontier² and the actuality of globalism and cultural renaissance, has come to understand culture differently. It is understood as constituted in peoples' appropriation of structurally provided sets of symbols, norms, values and ideals, which they negotiate in 'the relational context of [their] mutual involvement' with others (Ingold 1994: 329), which permit the 'intersubjective formation of signification and meaningful action' (Wicker 1997: 40). In this conception, cultures are the product of 'border-generating processes of inter-ethnic dialectics' (Wicker 1997: 36; see Barth 1969; Horowitz 1975), often shaped by cultural entrepreneurs taking advantage of socio-political opportunities (Cornell and Hartman 1998: 56-71).

Such understandings in respect of Aborigines began with the analyses in Jones and Hill-Burnett's (1986) study of the development of pan-Aboriginality and the collections edited by Jeremy Beckett (1988) and Ian Keen (1988). These studies sought to explain forms of Aboriginality which departed from the ideal, by studying the processes of their construction in the relationship with settler Australia. They examined the materials used, including site knowledge (Creamer 1988), 'Lingo' and style (Eades 1988; Schwab 1988) and the processes of resistance to the total institution (Morris 1988b) and socialisation of stigma (Carter 1988). Jacobs (1988) and Beckett (1988b: 204-08) considered the strategic projection of an Aboriginality matched to political purposes and achieved by the accentuation of collective identity and cultural homogeneity, selective reconstruction of tradition and performative substantialisation of the idealised Aboriginal type. Jordan (1988) identified the different identities made available by different Aboriginal pasts, within which individuals position themselves. And Ariss (1988) revealed the complexities of the literary reconstruction of Aboriginality, including the metaphorisation of continuity between the traditional and the contemporary.

These and other constructionist studies foregrounded Aboriginal agency and the interactional politics of the everyday. They challenged the notion of a single authentic Aboriginality, disaggregated monolithic Aboriginality and contributed to the recovery of Aboriginality by 'part'-Aborigines. But the dominant notion of

² The historiographic re-evaluation of the colonial relationships began with the histories of Charles Rowley (1970, 1972a, 1972b) and continued with those of, for example, Henry Reynolds (1981, 1987, 1990).

authenticity continued to influence their interpretations. They saw cultural continuity, social coherence and that which distinguished Aborigines from others. Barwick's (1988: 27-9) *Aboriginal Victorian Arcadia* for instance, portrayed complete belongingness and sharing, in which unemployed fathers 'were likely to spend their days teaching their children songs and stories of the past, and devising games and puzzles for their entertainment'. Jordan (1988) stressed a 'positive' identity based in tradition, and pleaded for an asocial autonomy in the formation of Aboriginality. Cowlshaw (1988a) glossed civil disturbance as recovery of self, ignoring self-marginalising consequences, and Morris (1988a: 72-7) celebrated Dhan-gadi demarcations of oppositional culture as if they effectively denied the state's version of culture and amounted to liberation (though elsewhere, see Morris 1988b: 53, he acknowledges that such behaviours confined them).

Most studies were reticent about critique of the Aboriginal agency being revealed. They were aware that assimilation was not only imposed from without, but also individually chosen and imposed through Aboriginal demands for complete loyalty and processes of 'shaming', but did not subject that socio-political pressure to examination. Cowlshaw (1988a: 103) interpreted it overly-generously as 'not necessarily a self-conscious decision to keep others in line, but a process stemming from intense consciousness of the meaning of behaviour which is threatening to the hegemony of whites'. Barwick (1988: 28) opted for 'strong emotions' and white prejudice.

Some essentialist assumptions infiltrated their constructivism. Deeply-rooted cultural and affective ties overdetermined differences in attitude, behaviour and social position. Even in contexts of 'intensive interaction' in 'settled' Australia (Keen 1988: 10-11), where they were 'biculturally competent' (Eades 1988: 99), '[a]bsorbed in the economy and urbanised', and shared their lives and problems with their working class neighbours (Barwick 1988: 30), Aborigines remained distinct, their Aboriginality aloof and their practices 'stubbornly autonomous' (see Rowse 1990: 190). Articulation of identity and demarcation of bounds were seen as the natural workings out of culture: the use of Lingo a 'powerful vehicle for the expression' of identity and a 'visible manifestation of a pervasive cultural system' (Schwab 1988: 83-5). Aboriginality would be 'truer' if 'purged of white interference' (Ariss 1988: 141).

These 'radical' (Morton 1998: 362) 'anti-colonial' (Thiele 1991a) studies favoured essentialism as necessary to the overthrow of colonial subjection and assimilation (Lattas 1993), valorised anti-social behaviour as the 'positive face of Aboriginality' (Cowlshaw 1988b: 241) or celebrated parodic resistance (Langton 1988). In effect, they replaced the essential traditional Aboriginality with an essential oppositional Aboriginality (see Tonkinson 1993: 598; Thiele 1991b), defaulting to and reinforcing the dominant discourse.

Poststructuralist understandings

Several special editions of academic journals in the early 1990s³ marked a shift in emphasis from the ethnographic to the discursive, which opened up the orthodoxy that persisted in constructivist accounts. They produced a very different Aboriginality. As co-editor of one edition, Bain Attwood (1992a: i, original emphasis) argued that knowledge, for example of the Aborigine, is not just 'natural or already *there*, but is an artifice, an entity constructed or invented by human beings' purposively and more or less self-consciously, in the case of the Aborigines for purposes of administrative control. In this view, language does not merely represent, but constructs, reality and culture is neither the natural nor unconstrained emergence of reality but a construct or achieved fiction (Clifford 1986: 143) produced by power relations, structural imposition, others' representations and individual agency in refashioning those representations. This approach followed McGrath's (1987) and Attwood's (1989) historical studies which showed that Aboriginality was an artefact of its representation by, and social interaction with, colonial Australian society. It coincided with Steven Thiele's (1991b) call for research to focus on the social and political conditions from which essentialist representations of Aboriginality sprang, and on the consequences of that essentialism. These interventions reflected and set the agenda of research in this period to explicate the discursive production of the ideal type.

Researchers examined the use of anthropological knowledge in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century construction of the ideal type. Wolfe (1991), for

³ *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* (1991), *Journal of Australian Studies* (1992), *Oceania* (1993).

example, showed how the notion of the Dreaming added to the ideal type, and served to support the governmental modernising and civilising mission, how the conjectured Aboriginal ignorance of paternity was used to justify assimilation policy (1994a), and how such instances of ‘repressive authenticity’ (1994b: 110-18; 1999: 163) were embedded in legislation (1994b: 111). Maddock (1991) showed how the anthropological understanding of the Aboriginal sacred and its translation into law contributed to the perception of Aborigines as highly religious. The process continued with the amassing of anthropological data on traditional laws and customs to support land claims during the 1990s (Tonkinson 1999: 133-34).⁴ And Goldie (1988) found that, in the process of ‘indigenising’ the colonisers by ‘othering’ the indigene, nineteenth-century writers represented Aborigines as an inferior mix of sexuality, violence, alien consciousness and mysticism and as historical relics.

Thiele (1991b: 186-88) argued that early images of authentic Aboriginality were later elaborated by those intent on apologising and accounting for a felt ‘responsibility and guilt for white colonial racism’, as evidenced in the repeal of discriminatory legislation and enactment of land rights and other measures of positive discrimination. The history of the sacred site (Archer 1991), the invocation of the Aborigine as exemplary conservationist (Sackett 1991) and the re-presentation of the ‘extant Image’ of the indigene in beneficent form in the ‘novel of the nineteen-eighties’ (Goldie 1988: 68), illustrate the mood. Images of idealised Aboriginality and colonial dispossession were appropriated by nationalists to redemptive purpose, placed at the symbolic centre of national identity and overlaid with a Western sacred quality (Lattas 1990, 1991, 1992a), and recruited in the task of constituting Australian particularity (Beckett 1992: 166).

From the 1960s, Aboriginal cultural entrepreneurs appropriated these representations of the mythical past, authentic identity and spiritual superiority as the base of what Archer (1991: 162-63) argues was a typically modernist, liberatory, nation building project. In becoming ‘black Australians’ (Beckett 1992: 166), they adopted the Dreaming complex (Wolfe 1991: 216) and other elements of generic cultural tradition such as the ‘spiritual connection with land’, ‘belief in

⁴ Such land claims date from the passage of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NT) 1976.

... “caring and sharing”, consensus decision-making, ... persistence of kin-oriented networks that underpin social behaviour ... and a certain quality of essence identified with Aboriginal blood’ (Keeffe 1988: 69; see also Maddock 1991: 227-28). Though primarily urban (Weaver 1984: 193), the entrepreneurs oversaw the invention of a common continent-wide tradition (see Tonkinson 1989, 1996, 1997, 1999; Sansom 1982; note 6 this chapter).

They also responded to the ideological dominance of white Australia by constructing an allied political ‘grammar’ of Aboriginality-as-resistance (Keeffe 1988: 70-2). They exploited white self-blame to present their marginalisation as the legacy of historical injustice and on-going discrimination (Thiele 1991b: 180, 188, note 29) and contrasted positive Aboriginal traits to negative white equivalents. They self-consciously borrowed, inflected with new connotations and otherwise developed cultural and resistance heroes, a vernacular, flag, unofficial ‘anthem’—‘we have survived the white man’s world’—and tent embassy, as symbols of distinctiveness and resistance (Keeffe 1988: 71). In these, as in slogans of public protest and ‘writing back’ (see Gilbert 1977; Bropho 1983; Roughsey 1984; Coe 1986), particularity and continuity coexisted.

This research literature showed how the Aboriginal ideal type, amounting to what Weaver (1984: 185-86) defined as a ‘public ethnicity’, was fabricated by corporate entities in their own interests. For instance, Rowse (1992a) found that the orthodox notion of Aboriginal political authority as the exercise of ancient writ was the product of administrators’ and older Aboriginal men’s coincident self-interest, the former in their search for employment and authoritative purchase with the people for whom they were responsible, and the latter in their interminable competition with other men. Otherwise, counter-culturalists appropriated Aboriginal traditions and artefacts to organise and animate their lifestyle (Newton 1988), New Agers did the same to effect their personal transformation and healing (Welch 2002), environmentalists juxtaposed the ‘extremely noble’ proto-environmentalist Aborigine to rapacious others to spark change (Sackett 1991: 241), and political activists appropriated the generic hunter-gatherer to advocate for ‘freer, less violent, more egalitarian or less territorial’ social systems (Myers 1988: 264).

Poststructuralist research pointed out that, though the ideal was positive in its reversal of colonialist hierarchies, it nevertheless remained within the same ‘master polarity [of] black/Aboriginal and white/non-Aboriginal’ (Morton 1998: 366; Thiele 1991: 184) that subjugated Aborigines. While the primordialism allowed Aborigines to be ‘the true owners of Australia’ and Europeans to have stolen it (Thiele 1991b: 180), it also meant that Aborigines, as Wolfe (1991: 216) said, ‘acquiesced in the terms encoded in’ the binarism and locked themselves into ‘the discourse of colonial power’, with difficult consequences. The ideal type created, and the attempt to gain access to government largesse via that type confirmed, a ‘hierarchy of authenticity’ (Hollinsworth 1992a: 145), competition to construct ‘the best account of traditional practice’ (Archer 1991: 164), and so winners and losers. Jacobs (1988: 35-41) reported for instance, that closely related groups in South Australia gained and lost rights to land according to the extent to which they conformed with or deviated from, the ‘traditional’ Aborigine. And the construction of the ecological ideal type involved Aborigines and others in ‘selectively accepting abetting evidence and opinions while studiously ignoring contrary data and judgements’ (Sackett 1991: 240). The process amounted to a false idealisation of collective subject and history, including the erasure of earlier periods of collaboration or accommodation in frontier conditions (Reynolds 1990; Birmingham 1992a; Jones 2007).

Researchers came to further important realisations about the ideal type. As signifier, it was found to signify nothing other than other images: ‘each representation of the indigene is a signifier for which there is no signified except the Image. The referent has little purpose in the equation’ (Goldie 1988: 59; see Roughley 1991). The imagined Aboriginality was seen to be built on a ‘deliberately vague and undifferentiated “tradition”’ (Tonkinson 1999: 140; see also 1993: 600; 1996) and disconnected from ‘situational and heterogeneous’ local and private Aboriginalities (Hollinsworth 1992a: 169).

Each individual’s Aboriginality was seen to be not his/her single or fixed primary identity, but one of an ensemble of subject positions, into and out of which he/she moved according to need. As Stephen Muecke (1992: 40) put it, ‘one becomes an Aboriginal poet on specific occasions for specific purposes’. And it was realised that there is no homogeneous group which can, as unitary

social actor, possess, own, change, lose or take control of its identity, as was suggested in some of the constructionist research above (see Thiele 1991b: 190-93).

Two implications were seen to follow. Firstly, for Muecke (1992: 40), the ‘totalising concept of Aboriginal culture’ created an enormous burden for Aborigines by constantly reminding them that they are ‘(Aboriginally) cultural’ and forcing them ‘into positions of essentialism, ... representativeness and knowledge, ... as if culture were an endowment’. It meant that the few “respectable” ways for Aboriginal people to find identity ... tend to be through particular forms of culture’ like art, film or sport, and to exclude others like administration, education or the professions (though as Keeffe 1988: 75 says, government strategy has created a class of ‘Koori-crats’). Rowse (1990) suggests that Cowlshaw’s (1988b) emphasis on oppositional Aboriginality in Brindleton marginalised the Aboriginality of those people who abide by wider social norms, drink moderately and work in schools and administrative positions. In effect, ‘the facts of empirical difference’, that is, of private Aboriginality from the ideal or public, the result of intermarriage, cultural intersection and the like, ‘are swept away’ (Keeffe 1988: 75).

Of equal moment, secondly, the type made every Aborigine deficient in his or her Aboriginality, since he/she in fact departed from type. No single Aborigine fitted the noble or ignoble savage, so all were diminished by comparison with either. Nor did Aboriginal politics always match expectations, and where it departed, as in development issues (Allen 1981; Anderson 1989), contemporary Aborigines were discredited as disappointing ‘shadows of their ancestors’ (Sackett 1991: 242).

Poststructuralist research then, saw the ideal type as liberatory but also limiting. It made available a more subtle and dynamic account of Aboriginality than had been the case, opening up possibilities and forcing reconsideration of the dominant narrative. It meant that tradition, resistance, collaboration and accommodation could be seen to coexist (Attwood 1989: 137-38; Birmingham 1992a; Trigger 1992; Jones 2007), manifestations of immanent culture could be known as performances, and alien imposition as also self-generation. The culture of opposition could be seen as a pathological ‘culture without interests, [which]

eschew[ed] the political process to celebrate an Otherness without future' (Rowse 1990: 190). The threat posed to white hegemony by irony or public misbehaviour was minimal; as Rowse (1990: 190) pointed out, 'to be a pitied and despised public embarrassment because one violates value consensus is only in a very weak sense to be a threat'. And disengagement from schooling on the grounds that it implies submission or softens the culture of opposition, is similarly unproductive. This research also hinted at the possibility of destabilising subjective consequences for urban and rural Aborigines made to feel their own lack *vis-à-vis* the obligatory type; they 'wanted to identify as Aborigines but felt that they had no cultural, religious, historical or ritualistic bases for a satisfying or genuine identification' (Tatz, in Keffe 1988: 77).

Yet these implications, like Attwood's call (1992b: 159) for engagement with the complex intertwining of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal pasts and futures, have not been taken up, in part because 'nostalgia for ... the romance of Aboriginal spirituality and otherness, militate against revision' (Cowlshaw 1992: 28). Native essentialisms were lauded for providing a necessary 'sense of continuity and ... groundedness' (Lattas 1993: 254; 1992b). Critical evaluations were denounced as predatory white attempts to 'police' Aboriginal reclamation of authenticity (Lattas 1992b: 160). Some scholars (for instance Wolfe 1992: 338) suggested an 'epistemological no-go zone' to protect Aborigines from the 'reach of the colonising academy', while others (for instance Morton 1998: 376) feared that without essential definition 'the very phenomenon of Aboriginality disappears.'

These implications of poststructuralist research have not been taken up more widely for other reasons. As a sub-state nationalism with little real desire for, or hope of achieving, actual independence, Aboriginal politics was 'permanently frozen' in 'the mythology of suffering and failure' and the 'simple dichotomy between colonised and coloniser' (Archer 1991: 166). Accordingly, and in order to sustain the dominating 'other' (Thiele 1991b: 189), the politics actively resisted attempts to come to a more real liberation from the terms of the governing regime. It did little to deconstruct the absurdity 'of summaris[ing] a whole people [sic]

with a single word' (Roughley 1991: 211).⁵ Rather, it refused multiplicity and imposed social pressure, such as the pejorative naming of those who *do* enjoy multiplicity (in the form say, of success beyond the notional community) as “yellafellas”, “flash blacks”, “coconuts” or “up-town niggers” (Morton 1998: 361). Aboriginal politics ‘imposed new silences’ on Aborigines and, via the notion that only Aborigines could represent Aboriginal culture, sought to do the same to non-Aborigines (Hollinsworth 1992a: 137, 150; see Attwood 1992a: xii-xiii; Said 1988). Finally, orthodox notions of Aboriginality have become commonsensical, real and important to Aborigines (see Keffe 1988: 79-80; Archer 1991: 168-69; Nyoongah 1992; Tonkinson 1997: 5; 1999: 140). The ideal type, Weaver’s ‘public’ Aboriginality, Muecke’s ‘burden’, was and is jointly constituted, imposed and defended.

Postmodern understandings of Aboriginality

Contemporary understandings of Aboriginality encompass, contest and add to this texture. Orthodox conceptions persist, alongside heterodox understandings of Aboriginality as the product of border activity, romantic elaboration and as one of a multiplicity of identities, as well as newer understandings. A strong influence on the new interpretive stance is Derrida’s (1976, 1981, 1982) notion of *différance*, which destabilises the binarism on which Aboriginalist scholarship, administration and identity politics have depended. His argument that difference and similarity coexist and are mutually interpenetrated and interdependent, implies that the orthodox incompatibility of monolithic identity and difference is entirely inadequate to the contemporary daily reality of compatibility. The contemporary stance is also influenced by the postcolonial recognition of the curious interdependence of subaltern and dominant histories (Said 1988: viii) and cultures. Aboriginal culture is known to be, as Gilroy (in Hollinsworth 1992a: 137) says of all cultures, not ‘hermetically sealed off from others’, and ‘never

⁵ Unlike the rest of her analysis, which is critical of the ‘primitivism exercise’, in concluding her 1991 article, Sackett is ambivalent about extending a similarly critical eye to Aboriginal participation in that exercise. She says (note 11, p. 244) that in participating, ‘they are not so much participating in their own subjugation as employing the language of the wider group to construct their opposition to being dominated’; she also enrolls Ariss (1988: 136) in support: ‘It is only from this position that Aboriginal people can resist the seduction of assimilation and confidently work at rebuilding a unique identity’. Roughley appears similarly ambivalent, in that he applies his Derridean critique to the decentring of dominant white discourse but not Aboriginal discourse.

fixed, finished or final ... [but instead] fluid, actively and continually made and re-made.' Individual Aborigines' actual simultaneity, fluidity, hybridity and ambiguity of identification, their transcendence of the dichotomy of incommensurable 'black' and 'white', is also increasingly revealed in scholarship influenced by these scholarly developments (as below).

Perhaps unexpectedly, material change and scholarly revelation have led not to reconciliation but intensification of the apparent separation between black and white and between the imagined and lived Aboriginal realities. Those changes and developments in understanding have revitalised Aboriginalist efforts to construct the 'certainty' available in a simulated (Baudrillard 1983, 1994) or hyper reality (Eco 1986). With the emergence of this simulated Aboriginality the contemporary period is coming to be characterised by a conceptual bifurcation, with critical thinkers seeking to understand and explain, and others to eliminate (even as in doing so, paradoxically, they construct), complexity and ambiguity. The outcome is greater symbolic difference in a context of lesser material difference, as well as, since the symbolic creates its own reality and infiltrates material reality, confusing complexity.

In the 1990s, researchers noted radical real-world social changes in urban and remote Australia, and their impacts on Aboriginalities. Robert Tonkinson (1996; 1999; 2004: 190, 194-95; 2007) saw the early 1970s introduction of self-determination policies as the watershed moment when Aborigines in the Western Desert could no longer maintain their long-standing conceptual separation of Aboriginal 'Law business' and 'Whitefella' domains. Will Tyler (1994) saw the transformations in remote communities and the national imaginary of the 1980s as 'epochal', in that they made it no longer sensible to consider remote, fringe and urban Aboriginal 'worlds' as separable. In urban, rural and remote contexts routine relations, face-to-face and mediated, intra, inter and extra community, were between interpenetrated local, national and global cultural, political and economic worlds, which contradictorily simulated, blurred and fragmented the meanings of Aboriginality (Tyler, W. 1994: 13-15). In those contexts, Gelder and Jacobs (1995: 158) argued, local referents were unbound from context and people developed a relativised Bakhtinian self-awareness. Later, Noel Pearson (2000) and Peter Sutton (2001: 130-33, 154) located the tipping point in the *laissez-faire*

policies of the 1970s. Furthermore, a growing Aboriginal middle-class of professionals, public servants and educated leaders emerged in both urban centres and bush communities, living 'city lives' (Young 1990: 226-56) of difference and mobility, and contributing to 'growing social integrationism' (Sutton 2001: 131).

These circumstances exposed the orthodoxy (of a prior, prime, unitary, solidary and monolithic Aboriginality, and a simple binarism between that and a universal human or citizen sameness) to deconstruction. The orthodoxy is found to be inadequate to the actual relationality of sameness and difference in general and Aboriginality and citizenship in particular. It proposes that Aborigines either share nothing or everything with other Australians, whereas the actual relationship is such that neither identity nor difference is absolute, fixed or prioritised. Paul Patton (1995a, 1995b) argued that the actual undecidability of the relation between identity and difference is evident in the Mabo judgement and native title law. In them, treatment as different requires an admission of sameness:

Native title is ... both incorporated within and foreign to the common law [and] indigenous people's relationships to the land are at once both a form of ownership and a form of non-ownership. They both are and are not proprietary relations and as such are external to and incorporated within English common law (1995a: 89).

Further to this notion of difference, individuals coextensively identify with or belong to, multiple categories, and may in any context and at any moment express any of those affiliations beyond their Aboriginality. Aborigines are different and the same simultaneously; in them as in others, identity and difference coexist in fluid interaction, and the articulation of difference can only occur in the relationship with others. Thus, difference is very much more ambivalent than conceived in the orthodox narrative.

Patton's (1995a: 87-8) view was that Aborigines can have both an archetypically Aboriginal spiritual, *and* an archetypically White proprietorial or pecuniary interest in land. Others have viewed Aboriginality similarly. Tonkinson (1996, 1999) saw Mardu Aboriginality as a fluidly disaggregating and amalgamating blend of cultures and languages, as intertwining cultural and political dimensions of identity, and as 'reaching a comfortable accommodation [between] "two laws", those of Christianity and the Dreaming' (2004: 197). In his

analysis of the politicisation of policy, Sutton (2001: 131, 157) took seriously the notion that each individual Aborigine can be different from, and the same as, other Aborigines and Australian citizens:

There are now a great many successful Aboriginal people whose identity is never questioned but for whom kinship has become a mostly private matter that does not in general determine which town they live in, or for whom they work, or with whom they decide to share resources, ... live, ... engage in cooperation or competition, or ... have a drink.

Tyler's (1993: 331-32) notion, consistent with these conceptions, is that Aboriginality has come to be a self-reflexive identity of choice. These conceptions are part of the movement away from the authentic Aborigine as sole reference point, towards a more relativist understanding in which no single form of Aboriginality is superior. 'Aboriginality' is gradually being released from that particular bind, to become Aboriginalities. Aboriginal cultures can be the syncretic product of the colonial interaction of precontact Aboriginal and Christian, and Aboriginal identity one of several 'layered' or 'overlapping' identities within a complex Aboriginal personhood (Pearson 2006a; 2006c).

Aborigines can be Asian (Reynolds 2003; 2005; Stephenson 2007), Afghan cameldriver (Stevens 1989), Christian (Campbell 2006) or 'Aboriginal-Anglo-Asian Australian' (Paridies 2006: 357). Aboriginality is ambiguously different from non-Aboriginality. Paridies (2006: 357) for instance, is 'both coloniser and colonised' and Russell (2002: 139) strangely 'in-between'. It is also context-dependent, to such an extent that a non-Aborigine may be recognised as an Aborigine in certain contexts (Oxenham *et al.* 1999; Fischer 2000) and conversely, an Aborigine can be easily 'mis/taken' (Holland 1996). This is an emerging post-identarian Aboriginality.

Though it recognises multiplicity and contradiction, this body of research has not adequately theorised the relationship between Aboriginal and other cultures and identities; it is conceived merely in terms of amalgamation or syncretism. Nor do comments like Tonkinson's (1999: 140), that attacks on the authenticity of the Aboriginality of those of mixed descent 'assaults the very core of their being', suggest that the new Aboriginality is securely understood. If it is one of several identities, the notion of core is problematised, and such attacks may and may not

assault individuals in that way (though cf. Paradies 2006: 359). Patton's (1995a: 93) supposition that an ideal postmodern politics would allow 'self-governing indigenous communities' needs qualification too, for if such communities are ambiguously different, that is *différent*, then the notions of their distinctness and autonomous self-governing capacity become problematic.

Nonetheless, post-Aboriginality is inclusive, in that it makes Aborigines ambiguously the same as, and different from, other Australians, and non-self-identical. It opens up significant possibilities like the realisation that protection and support should not be extended 'to indigenous communities only on the basis that they maintain[ed] and practice[d] a traditional form of life' (Patton 1995a: 89). And it makes it possible that many Aborigines not only share the lives and problems of working- or middle-class whites, but identify with and *as*, Aboriginal, urban working- or middle-class and (culturally and/or racially) white.

But in its proposition that Aborigines be considered as neatly same/different at one moment and as humans or citizens at another, this is difficult for administrators. It is difficult for Aboriginal activists too, because it threatens the political influence enjoyed on the basis of alterity, dispossession and marginality. It is broadly unattractive because it abandons the ontological control provided by objectively knowable identity and difference. Thus there is a loose coalition of powerful countervailing forces, including a political imperative to codify and regulate, scholarly reluctance to challenge the orthodoxy (see Kowal and Paradies 2005) and indigenous hardening of boundaries. In responding to indigenous disadvantage, this coalition of interests is typified by a 'massive emphasis on rights' (Sutton 2001: 139), externalisation of cause to colonial dispossession and subsequent dislocation, discrimination, alienation and poverty (2001: 134, 147), and recourse to culture defined as 'harmless artefacts such as paintings, songs, dances and languages, and the traditional Dreaming ideology that has been their source' (2001: 140-41).

The coalition of interests manufactures an imaginary world built on 'consciously contrived' (Rowse 2000b: 1530) and often, as in Hope Vale (Gibson and Pearson 1987; Pearson 2000: 18), deformed, corrupted and manipulated culture, tradition and identity, and 'ersatz, cavalier, causal theory' (Sutton 2001: 148). Within this world, says Sutton (2001: 148), policy is blind to the complexity

generated by the combination of old cultural forms, the effects of colonisation and recent transformations. Programs based on, and perpetuating, the imagined cultural forms engage with none of the deep structural and cultural issues which must be undertaken to genuinely tackle disadvantage.

To Sutton (2005: 2), Ian Anderson's call for self-government (see Anderson and Loff 2004) as the basis of improved indigenous health, without mention of the need to tackle culturally embedded behaviours, contributes. But this imagined world is widespread and its effect profound. It is evident in the return of the 'noble savage' (Rowland 2004) and other innateness (see Foley 2000; Rolls 2001, 2002; Huggins 2003). It is evident in the assumption of resistant marginality and externalisation of cause to the colonial legacy and racism/ethnocentrism (Atkinson 1996, 2002; Huggins 2003; Ogowang *et al.* 2006), the assertion of inherent moral and epistemological superiority (Kowal and Paradies 2005; Paradies 2006: 360) and the call for control of discourse to which Palmer and Groves (2000), Oxenham *et al.* (1999) and Walter *et al.* (2006: 344) accede and contribute. It is evident too in the commonplace deconstruction of whiteness (Moreton-Robinson 1998, 1999, 2002, 2004, 2006; Russell 2001) and colonial representations of Aboriginality and near absence of similar deconstruction of the revived Aboriginality (see Oxenham *et al.* 1999; Russell 2001: 63-4, 73-92; Butler-McIlwraith 2006). (Such deconstruction might, for instance, broach the Aboriginal contribution to the 'tensions between "representation" and "representativeness"' to which Grossman (2003: 8) and Moreton-Robinson (2003b) refer.)

This weight of politics and representation, plus media spectacle and commodification (Tyler, 1994: 15), constructs a powerful phantasmatic world. It fabricates, in 'self-constituting systems of symbolic exchange', hyperreal simulations of Aboriginality which need no social reality to sustain them and 'become constitutive of the social order' (Tyler, 1994: 13, 14). That is, the discursive construction of the Aborigine builds a culture of simulacrum—a hyperreal Aboriginality and an oppressive Whiteness—that prevails over lived realities.

The simulacrum forms its own 'social actuality' (Tyler, 1994: 15), experienced forcefully by those who seek to contravene it (Paradies 2006: 357). The profundity of the simulacrum is such as to bring a great many of mixed race and culture to

assert a defiant orthodox Aboriginality and ignore, obfuscate or otherwise disenfranchise their other identities and their creolité (see Morrissey 2003). It is such as to render others like Butler-McIlwraith (2006) or Russell (2002: 141; though see her 2006: 1, note 1) unable to problematise their Aboriginality sufficiently to throw away the 'colonial mirror' (Dodson 1994: 9) and its Aboriginally-derived equivalent. Both could be expected to have the conceptual tools that would allow them to emancipate themselves from the tensions of the bind in which, as mainstream indigenous academics, they find themselves. But those tools are not fully available to them, because their attachment to the simulacrum necessitates obfuscation of their material realities and possibilities. They are conscious of their multiplicity, but, in thrall to the idealised Aboriginality as a separate dimension, interpret that reality in contradictory 'white and colonised' terms. Neither can conceive, or if they do so countenance, the liberatory truth that her lived reality is of simultaneous intersected bothness. The simulacrum Aboriginality has them mute their capacity for analysis and liberation. Russell (2001: 73; 2002: 142) allows it to deny her the opportunity to acknowledge the 'genuine difference' of her personal Aboriginality. Butler-McIlwraith's resolution, to switch between the position of the intellectual and the colonised, goes part way, but shrinks back from, emancipation. The tensions these women feel are a product of the simulation imagination.

It is the fantasy world which adds this extra order of dislocation and tension to the complexity noted elsewhere in this review. To conclude, this last aspect of the Aboriginality literature illustrates an intensifying differentiation between a dominant hyperreal public Aboriginality and a multitude of divergent, ambiguously different but discursively invisible private Aboriginalities. This is the current point of understanding of contemporary Aboriginality.

Other indigenous people

A reading of the literature regarding indigenous identity in New Zealand, South America, the Pacific and North America reveals that it has been framed and

constituted in comparable ways, with comparable consequences.⁶ In North America a similar orthodox metanarrative celebrated the civilising and modernising project and naturalised aboriginal inferiority, homogeneity and assimilation (Nash 1995: 947-56; Peterson 1978: 45), and remains ‘indelibly etched in the [US] national consciousness’ (Nash 1995: 947). As in Australia, this has been contested by a heterodoxy (Clifton 1978; Lukens 1997; Peterson 1978; Scheik 1979; Peterson-del Mar 1995; Lukens 1997; Adelman and Aron 1999; Basson 2005) which has explored the multiple intercultural borderlands and native groups’ multi-faceted negotiation of them.

This research has uncovered a rich mestizo heritage of cultural intersection, political accommodation and collaboration, intimacy, ethnogenesis and identity complexity. It has explored the demographic change (Snipp 1992; Nash 1995: 959) and invention of tradition in the 1960s and 70s (Linnekin 1983; Handler and Linnekin 1984; Nagel 1995), from which emerged a supra-tribal pan-Indianness. It has identified too, how the intersection of ‘fixed, rigid, essentialised and bureaucratised’ (Strong and Van Winkle 1996: 558), but changing (Lawrence 2003), official definitions and return to remote communities (Nagel 1995) has produced political and subjective turbulence.

This research acknowledges the full complexity of the encounter, the continuing difficulties of that complexity and recuperates the human agency of those involved. It has however, been resisted by many (not all, see Kroeber 1992) Native American writers, who have selectively disregarded Native constructionism, embraced ambiguity in respect of whiteness but not Nativeness and/or defaulted to a primordial Nativeness (see Lawrence 2003: 21-22;

⁶ In New Zealand see for example Moeke-Maxwell (2005) in respect of state normalisation. For examples of Maori essentialism see the collection in which Durie (1995: 34) claims that ‘Maori customary law has been here from time immemorial’, and Tahi (1995: 64) that though Maori live in the modern world they are ‘culturally Maori in concept and practice and frequently “dip into” the Pakeha culture’. On the construction of tradition see Hanson (1989), Sissons (1993), Barcham (2000) and Pritchard (2000). In respect of multiplicity, ambiguity and hybridity see Tilbury (1998: un-paginated), who says that long term immersion in the wider society has meant that ‘there is little to point to in terms of “cultural differences” between Maori and Pakeha which can be articulated’. The New Zealand notion of biculturalism assumes a binary separation of solidary group identities (see Wilson and Yeatman 1995). Regarding South America, see for instance Jackson’s (1989) study of the Tukanoans of Columbia, which argues that their ‘Indigenism with a capital ‘I’, self-conscious indigenism, along with self-conscious culture’ is built on the appropriation of notions of who they are *from* the intrusive dominant culture as well as other Indians, ‘albeit in contradiction to it’ (1989: 133). They modify their culture in this way as part of negotiating contact with other ethnic groups. Regarding the Pacific, see Linnekin and Poyer 1990; Keesing and Tonkinson 1982.

Sawchuck 2000). Researchers who have acknowledged complexity have defended their work on the grounds that it exposes the tragic absurdity that the ‘essentialised discourse of “Indian blood”’ is a necessary condition for survival and vitality of many individuals and communities (Strong and Van Winkle 1996: 554, 565) even as it locks over a million⁷ Native Americans into the profound dilemma of affirming their official unitary, and denying their lived multiple, identities. The effect of Nativist resistance has been, as in Australia, to limit the pursuit of such research, despite its liberatory possibilities.

Postcolonial migrants

Research in respect of those displaced by decolonisation and repatriation/emigration to, and their descendants of ‘mixed race’ (Parker and Song 2001) in, the imperial centre reveals similar tensions but a greater reflexive engagement with and negotiation of them. In the case of those from the Caribbean and South Asia now in Britain, global discourse and local politics construct an invariant and homogeneous blackness and innocent essential black subject, which is divorced from profane heterogeneity and categoric division within, and pressures individuals to perform the ideal type and disavow their actual ambiguity, and has problematic subjective consequences. In each respect their situation is similar but not identical to the Aboriginal. Several prominent Afro-Caribbean and Asian intellectuals have rejected this in unequivocal terms—the politics as absolutist and narcissistic, Africanist culture fantastical and voguish, and consequences disastrous. They have broken through the barrier of the victim-perpetrator binary to acknowledge the depth of Western thought in their most radical ideas, incorporate the conservative discourse of individual responsibility (without abandoning systemic analysis), and engage in creative introspection rather than reactive blaming of others for self-destructive black behaviours. In this, they have, as Gilroy (1993a: 11) says, ‘traded in the moral benefits of victim status for something more challenging and more radical—a sense of ourselves as agents in the endless struggle towards our own emancipation’. This work serves to

⁷ This number is an indicator only; it is taken from 1990 US census figures and analysis of the numbers of urban people identifying as native while retaining other loyalties; see Nagel 1995: 951-53 and Lawrence 2003: 14, 20. Lawrence suggests a population in 1994 of up to 7 million.

highlight the failure of Aboriginalist research to break the shackles of the Aboriginal version of the postcolonial predicament.

The global discourse of quarantined civilisations, uni-dimensional faiths, discrete races and regional blocs (Huntington 1996) and resurgent national cultures impacts all nations. In the UK, a dominant discourse proposes a schema of discrete and bounded ‘communities’—the Afro-Caribbean, Asian, African and more generic black—each with its own reified culture (Baumann 1996: 20-31). This discourse is used as a strategy of control by liberal and conservative political actors and the elites of the minorities it creates. Black nationalist politics manufacture defining social structures and cultural practices, notably the trope of the family and biopolitical kinship, fixed notions about sexuality and relations between the sexes and a ‘purified psyche’ (Gilroy 1993a: 194, 196). Though from diasporic sources, such markers are generalised to establish an authentic black sameness and essential difference and used to demand the allegiance of members, ‘silence dissent and censor political debate’ (Gilroy 1993a: 124). The politics thus contributes to the institutionalisation of mutually exclusive monolithic blackness and Britishness (see Gilroy 1993a: 58).

Yet in actuality there is comprehensive cultural intersection and transformation. Sen (2006) shows how interrelated and internally differentiated are crude civilisational blocs. He and others (Gilroy 1993a: 54-5; Baumann 1996; Cable 2005) have shown that the imagined black community is composed of experientially and historically distinct elements, which respond to divergent racisms and affiliate diversely according to political persuasion, economic pursuit, professional obligation, literary involvement, socio-economic and taste culture, recreational interest and religious loyalties. The depth of cultural intersection is such that nationalist politics, notions of the self, the idea of progress and nostalgic Afrocentrism are all deeply Western (Gilroy 1993a: 66, 128-29, 209-17). The depth makes it ‘impossible to speak coherently of black culture in Britain in isolation from the culture of Britain as a whole’ (Gilroy 1993a: 34-5). These differences within and between black cultures, and differences from the mythic, ‘live on under the signs of their disappearance’ (Gilroy 1993a: 194) that are produced in the dominant discourse and ethno-politics.

Gerd Baumann (1996: 30-6) showed how in the 'demotic' discourse of their everyday, individuals of the multi-ethnic immigrant communities of Southall, London identify with, use and so reproduce, the dominant discourse. Yet they also fluidly and contingently distinguish between, recombine, put to unexpected uses, and so disengage, question, push aside and dissolve the categories of that dominant discourse. Shirley Tate (2005) details similar negotiation of discourses by Afro-Caribbeans of various hue and background, and Gilroy (1993a: 134) sees Afro-Caribbeans' vernacular, particularly musical, negotiation as a 'politics of transfiguration'. Many others have revealed similar negotiation of intersecting discourses of nationality, gender and sexuality in widely-disparate contexts.⁸ In the process, individuals assimilate, repudiate, manipulate and adapt identity positions and create a multitude of alternative, hybrid yet still authentic identities, like that suggested by Tate's (2005) 'an-other Black[ness]'. This is the routine 'hard graft' required of the many who see themselves and seek general acceptance as compound black-English-British selves, rather than as, as racism and politics would have it, incongruous curiosity or outrage (Gilroy 1993a: 68, 75-9, 87). In the process of achieving black identities which disappoint those that are authorised, in 'remov[ing] Black masks to reveal Black skins' (Tate 2005: 164), blackness becomes 'a necessarily multi-accentual sign' (Gilroy 1993a: 112).

The black British then, live an ambiguous doubleness, in but not of the West and in but beyond the authentic pressed upon them. But their transgressive reality is recognised, theorised and celebrated by intellectuals of the postcolonial African diaspora. Their subjectivities are conceptualised in terms of double consciousness (Du Bois 1965), *creolité*, *métissage* and *mestizaje* (Fanon 1986; Lionnet 1989; Glissant 1989); the processes of their enunciation (Bhabha 1990b; 1994: 36-9) to include the strategic use of essentialism (Spivak 1988, 1989), dialogism (Bakhtin 1981) and performativity; they as subjects '*almost the same but not quite*' (Bhabha 1994: 89, original emphasis) or 'half-different and partially familiar' (Gilroy 2000: 106; see Hall 1990), and their cultures 'changing same' (Gilroy 1991; 2000: 129).

⁸ See Ang 1993a, 1993b, 2001; Noble *et. al* 1999; Martinez 1997; Lo 2000.

Aboriginal lop-sidedness

The above research develops our understanding of the new ethnicities (Hall 1988, 1991b) of the present that inform the consideration of Aboriginalities in this thesis. It problematises the dominant discursive reality, revealing the differences and interactions between it and the demotic lived realities, and the subjective impacts of both differences and interactions. It has made difficult the notion of the innocent essential black subject (Hall 1988: 28), allowing peoples' actual lived complexity to be known and challenging the control afforded the dominant discourse by its 'binary impasses' and 'exclusionary practices' (Lionnet 1989: 5). Thus, the revelation of ambiguous *métis* doubleness is essentially emancipatory.

This postcolonial research is highly relevant to Aboriginal Australians. It suggests that Aboriginal cultures are deeply permeated by others, their community less solidary, their individual identities multiple, their particularity changing and their difference ambiguous. Yet research in Australia has been unable to significantly challenge the dominant political thrust, which has continued to stress essential blackness, solidary sameness and dichotomous difference. As a result, Aborigines find themselves in a version of Hage's (2003: xi) 'upside down' or 'lopsided' reality, in which the discursive imagined reality is different from, overlaid on and more powerful than, their actual reality. The hyperreal or simulation Aboriginality has more purchase and authority with subjects and creates an apparent reality which can problematise their capacity to live their material reality. The categoric Aboriginality and its imagined reality of distinctness can prevail over contradictory demotic discourses and lived realities of social integration and relatively 'easy multiplicity' (Hobsbawm 1996), which are troubled but continue. In the literature, Aborigines appear to live an ambiguous doubleness, which the discursive overlay compounds. The literature also suggests that the lopsidedness may have individuals reject the emancipatory possibilities of multiplicity and growth. Though the extent to which their lived reality is shaped by the dominant imagined reality, and the consequences of that are not yet known, it would appear to consign individuals to a problematic unresolvable state. All this is implied in my use of the term 'complexity' below.

Political liberalism and progressive public policy

Much of the literature above has implied that problematic complexity is an artefact of the conditions of possibility made available by progressive public policy in the liberal constitutional state, specifically by governmental attempts to manage the relationship, combined with the responses of indigenous social movements.⁹ This second section of the chapter examines that notion. It begins with an outline of the ‘drift to group particularity’ (Vincent 2002) in liberal public policy, in which the state manages cultural pluralism via a policy paradigm which, while attempting a universalist balance, succumbs to discursive pressure and has tended toward a communitarian accommodation (that manifests in indigenous self-determination).

The section goes on to present the main lines of critique of that hegemonic approach, which are that culture, identity, group and community are not as represented in the politics; that group rights are a site of active self-construction which facilitate discrimination against internal minorities, and that accommodationist policies represent a retreat from the core liberal values of liberty and equality. The critique leads to proposals for a ‘third way’ of managing pluralism, but proposals from both communitarian and egalitarian direction misunderstand the simultaneous partial sameness of *différance* and so perpetuate the construction of lop-sided complexity. The section concludes by considering the few approaches that are informed by and seek to operationalise Aboriginal *différance*.

The drift to particularity

The republican liberal tradition of government is based on its universalistic principles, including respect for shared humanity, individual equality, freedoms

⁹ This is similar to the movements which coalesce around religious, gender, sexual and ethnic difference. In this section the focus is on the state relationship with indigenous people, but it considers issues of cultural difference, universalism and particularism more widely, and so makes reference to the situation of other minority groups. A ‘minority’ is taken to be as Offe (1998: 125-27) suggests, ‘a “structural minority”—a minority which, by virtue of its constitutive characteristics and the shared identity resulting therefrom, is bound to remain a minority even after its members have used their individual rights to a maximum extent. [It] ... must also be seen as an (unjustly) “oppressed” group—a group, in other words, that “deserves” fuller recognition than it can achieve through its own structurally limited means.’ This definition applies only insofar as the political representation as a group is taken at face value, which this thesis seeks to problematise; Offe suggests something similar.

and rights (of expression, association, movement, belief and political participation), accorded impartially to all, as humans and as citizens of national cultures. This tradition emerged from the collapse of hierarchical social structures and special arrangements in eighteenth-century Europe, and is reflected in the long-run drive to human emancipation around the world (Gitlin 1995: 311). Procedural liberalism defends these rights and the expectation of fair, secular and non-discriminatory treatment by others, including government (see Rawls 1971, 1985, 1993; Dworkin 1977, 1985) on the conviction that they protect universal human needs which transcend cultures (Barry 2001: 285), that individuals are equal units of a shared humanity and that 'similarity is primary and difference is secondary' (Ignatieff 1997: 70).

Informed by a 'wariness of the power of the majority over minorities' (Kukathas 1992: 107), procedural liberalism proposes that the state should not hold or support any organising definition of the good society, but should treat all citizens without discrimination in their pursuit of their own definition of the good. It is suspicious of identifications with communities or groups other than the nation, fearing that they threaten individual freedoms, and therefore resists the notion of specific group rights. Brian Barry (2001) argues that the civil, political, social and economic rights, qualified libertarian blindness to difference, minimal governmental intervention in the private sphere, and redistributive programs, obviate the need for group rights.

However, this approach has been challenged by scholars like Kymlicka (1989, 1995), Taylor (1994), Tully (1995) and Young (1989, 1990), who argue that it is oblivious to cultural and identity difference and unjustly discriminates against minorities. They argue that the supposedly universal is actually European male particularism 'masquerading as the universal' (Taylor 1992: 44; see Shachar 2001: 73-5), which unjustly devalues, stigmatises and assimilates other cultural values. Through not accommodating cultural differences, egalitarianism is said to oppress non-liberal ways of life.

This argument is associated with an increased focus on identity, which Taylor (1994) argues emanates from Rousseau's articulation of the fundamental importance of being aware of, in touch with, and true to, one's inner self, and Herder's suggestion that each individual should know and live in accord with

one's individuality (rather than external demands), and that the *Volk* should be true to its own *Geist*—its collective character, culture and Self. This thinking has led to collective and individual identities becoming urgent and at the same time vulnerable, the site of oppression, denial, misrecognition and contestation but also potential liberation; it is fundamental to the priority accorded identity in recent political theory and public policy, and the agitation by a succession of groups for the state to protect their cultures and identities as a matter of right. Others, including Gitlin (1995) and Ignatieff (1997) understand the rise of identity slightly differently, but agree that universalism has ceded to difference.

The proposition put by differentialist theorists is that justice demands that distinct minority 'cultural forms, practices or way[s] of life' (Young 1990: 43) be protected, accommodated and nurtured by the state. This (see Young 1990; Tully 1995; Kymlicka 1995; Barry 2001: 252-91) rests on conceptions of cultures as incommensurable wholes, that can be judged only in their own terms, not against any universalist or cross-cultural standards. They are assumed to be of equal worth, and each practice, norm or value to be critical to the sustenance and well-being of the whole, and of its members. Each instance of cultural change subtracts from the whole culture and contributes to socio-cultural disintegration. Group and individual well-being, therefore, require differential treatment consistent with cultural specificity. This logic of fragile cultural equality, incommensurability and victimisation justifies the claim to rights to distributive justice, exemptions from universalistic laws and positive support for, and public affirmation of, the worth of ancestral cultures.

In practice, the attempt to respect the commonly shared *and* the different in postcolonial liberal democracies is fraught. Egalitarian liberals argue for a 'melting pot' policy in which particularities of cultural practice or lifestyle are integrated in civil society and freedom of cultural expression is protected in the private sphere. They hold as prime a sense of shared belongingness and empathy for one's fellow citizens, and overarching commitment to the nation (Rawls 1971). They recognise the importance of groups such as the family or church, but are abidingly concerned with the potential exploitation of individuals at their hands and so support religions or ethnicities only to the extent that each is treated

neutrally, and that limiting conditions are imposed on their powers over members (see Fukuyama 2006).

Multicultural theorists argue for a more ‘mosaic’ conception of the nation but fall into two groups. Some, like Young (1990) and Tully (1995), argue for a strong multiculturalism which would grant sub-national communities significant jurisdictional autonomy, public voice and differentiated citizenships. They hold that minority groups have a claim on the individual at least equivalent, if not prior to, that of the larger society. For them, the way to achieve equality of outcomes is via differential treatment for groups. Others, like Taylor (1994) and Kymlicka (1989, 1995), endorse a ‘weaker’ multiculturalism which accepts the claim of some minority groups to self-government, but requires them to conform to liberal expectations. However, these others are ambivalent about the imposition of liberal standards because they also believe that group cultures offer their members subjective security, a sense of belonging, options for choice and personal autonomy (Kymlicka 1989: 166; 1995: 105). They are alive to the ‘tension between the accommodation of identity groups and the protection of citizenship rights’ (Shachar 2000: 68). Kymlicka (1995a: 34-44) acknowledges that group values and actions will at times transgress individual rights and supports the notion that on such occasions individual rights prevail. Yet at the same time, he accepts the principle of non-intervention in the affairs of those groups which constitute nations or societal cultures.

From this debate, the resolution in Western democracies has thus far been a regime of ‘rule-plus-exemption’ (Barry 2001: 33-60; Poulter 1987) in which communitarian logic and notions of culture prevail. Through specific exemptions, states provide support for, for instance, Muslim and Jewish animal slaughtering and Sikh dress practices, and Muslim teachers’ absence from work on Fridays (Okin 1998: 670). They permit gypsy (Okin 1998: 669) parents to withdraw their children from schooling, provide programs of affirmative action to protect some religious/ethnic cultural practices, and avoid confronting illegal others like Islamic clitoridectomy and polygamy, Hmong “marriage by capture” and Asian honour killings (Okin 1997, 1998). In the matter of self-governance, specifically family law, certain groups are permitted a measure of authority in marriage and divorce

practices (Shachar 2001: 77-85). States such as Canada support the capacity of Quebeckans to remain 'true to the culture of [their] ancestors' (Taylor 1994: 58).

Minority political strategy is energised, authorised, even 'taught' (Yuval-Davis 1992: 281), by differentialist theorising and policy, reductive models of culture, others' struggles and global institutions (Tully 1995; Fleras 1999; Havemann 1999; Niezen 2003). Indigenous political elites take heart from progressive thought, adopt the position of the Other proposed in Western theorising, often in an oppositional, anti-Western way (see Sen 2006), and 'invok[e] the logic of fair compensation for past injustices' as the major means of 'extract[ing] concessions' (Offe 1998: 136) from states.

The state is vulnerable to such appeals, and national law can be equivocal (Poulter 1987: 601-02) and disinclined to intervene even where tradition is used to override members' individual rights. It has, in Fukuyama's (2006: 15) judgement, 'ceded entirely too much authority to cultural communities' and for Shachar (2001), accepted that the costs of accommodation will unequally burden some group members, and thereby sanctioned the violation of their rights as citizens. Kymlicka (1995: 6) thinks that states can at times 'seem motivated ... by the need to appease belligerent minorities'. Many scholars too, are overly deferential to minority cultures 'out of a hyperconcern to avoid cultural imperialism' (Okin 1998: 665).

Though often primordialist (Keeffe 1988: 74), a number of understandings that Hirst (2005: 280-91) calls 'fallacious' have been taken for granted in public policy in respect of Aborigines (Keefe 1988: 76) and conditioned Aboriginal political strategy. Those understandings—that Aborigines share a rich traditional culture, naturally share and care for each other, are disadvantaged primarily by white prejudice and that land rights and self-determination will cure their ills—have contributed to significant gains, from recognition as Aborigines with rights as individuals, and *as* Aborigines (Attwood 1989, 2003; McGregor 1997, 2000; Goodall 1996; Chesterman and Galligan 1997; Chesterman 2005), to the high points of Land Rights, Native Title and the former ATSIC (Havemann 1999b: 44-66; Rowse 2002; Borrows 2001: 617-18; Jarrett 2001).

However, the governmentality literature¹⁰ shows that these notions reflect the liberal governmental management of cultural difference by a subtle normalising manipulation of rights and free choice. States achieve a cunning (Povinelli 1998, 2002) regulation of culture and identity by inventing the realities to be regulated, and consolidating and politicising categories as the basis on which to grant rights, as themselves ‘mechanisms of governance and mentalities of rule’ (Weller 2006: 5). States accommodate rights claims on the basis of regularised difference. This establishes, in the case of indigenous groups, ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ ways of being Native, with the opposition used as the basis of a notionally free choice between full membership and non-membership. Through the conditions and incentives of ‘the inclusive, liberal, non-repressive policies of self-determination [indigenous peoples] are now contained in self-administered enclaves’ (Tyler 1994: 13). Thus difference-friendliness, used as a technology for making manageable the complexities of cultural pluralism, contributes to the drift to particularism and the increasing complexity of indigenous realities.

This means of governance is applied to North American (Paine 1977; Dyck 1991; Lawrence 2003) and Australian indigenous people (Beckett 1988b; Tyler 1993, 1994; Morris 1988a, 1988b; Kapferer 1995; Hollinsworth 1996; O’Malley 1996; Rowse 1992b, 1998; McGregor 2004). Yet, despite warnings, indigenous political elites have ‘reached for [the orthodox notions of culture and self deployed in such governance] to press their claims’ (Iverson 2002: 164). Identity political investment thus combines with state administrative and nation-building imperatives to perpetuate the fictitious indigenous culture, identity, community and subject as the object of public policy.

The uncertain advance of policy in respect of complexity

As has been suggested, scholars and dissident members of the policy and minority communities are aware of the danger of cultural relativism and fundamentalism. They see how the ‘thickening of identity politics’ and proliferation of exemptions can incite resentment, come at the expense of “‘universalism”, “common culture”, “the human condition”, “liberality”, “the Enlightenment project”” (Gitlin 1995:

¹⁰ See Barry, Osborne and Rose 1996; Burchell, Gordon and Miller 1991; Dean 1994a, 1999; Dean and Hindess 1998; Glazer and Moynihan 1975; Rose 1990, 1993, 1996a, 1996b, 1999.

311), and paradoxically increase group members' vulnerability to injustice. They are coming to realise the inadequacy of orthodox conceptions of culture and identity, to an understanding of lop-sidedness and complexity, and the contribution that orthodox theory and policy make to it. Their work is exposing the counter-productivity of the group rights regime and proposing a correction in the direction of universalism, leavened with the beginnings of sensitivity to simultaneous multiple group belongingness.

Critique of the multicultural approach

Political theorists are well aware, at a level abstracted from lived reality, of the contemporary labyrinth of cultural intersection, negotiation, dynamism and heterogeneity (Tully 1995; Ivison *et al.* 2000), and minority individuals' active adoption of ascribed categoric identities (Kukathas 1992) and enjoyment of multiple overlapping and concurrent affiliations (Ivison 2002: 141). At that level, Barry (2001: 81) knows that individuals may be able to 'assimilate (or be assimilated) to the common nationality without giving up distinctive cultural attributes [or] ... losing a distinctive identity'. Sen (2006) argues that policy should not be addressed to the Muslim community because it marginalises all Muslim individuals' other identities, and as Cable (2005: 46) says, 'encourages exaggerated deference to unrepresentative "community leaders"'.

These thoughts indicate the scrutiny to which the culturalist assumptions of multicultural theorising and policy-making are now subjected. For instance, Baumann (1997: 222) argues the falsity of the assumption of ethnic communities as 'self-evident, quasi-biological collectives of a reified "culture"', Jaggar (1999) questions the notion that groups can be exclusively bounded and have continuing determinate interests, and Barry (2001: 96) rejects the notion of social group because, for example, neither women, the working class nor the old have a distinctive culture or way of life, nor do all gay men adopt a 'gay lifestyle'. For Wicker (1997: 36), 'cultures and ethnic groups as actual, autonomous totalities ... no longer exist'. And in arguing that notions of inter-temporal unity and justice are difficult to sustain, even in the case of Holocaust victims or African-Americans, Offe refers to the complicated interrelationship between 'ties of historical causation ... and ... ties of recollective identification' (1998: 129; see

also Kukathas 2003), that is, the self-conscious recovery-invention-performance of culture in order to conform to notions embedded in protective legislation.

Barry argues (2001: 22, 33 *and passim*) that state categorisation politicises religious and ethnic identities, making those with ‘little cultural content’ substantive, encouraging the repackaging of nostalgia as obligatory cultural practice or custom as obligatory religious practice. That is, as we have seen with Australian Aborigines, as real differences are subsumed with globalism, groups actively distinguish themselves, exaggerating symbolic differences in order to justify political demands. Ignatieff (1997: 34-71) calls this a ‘narcissism of minor difference’, and it contributes to the constant escalation of special rights claims.

Offe (1998; also see Kukathas 1992; Yuval-Davis 1992; Okin 1997, 1998; Tamir 1997) outlines many of these problems and their anti-liberatory consequences for some sectors of marginal groups. He notes that the ‘good’ of collective survival can lead to communally-authorized constraint incompatible with liberal notions of justice, freedom and equality. He argues (1998: 136) that political elites use group rights to empower themselves at the expense of ‘internal heretics or others whom they consider less “worthy” members of the group they represent’. Barry too (2001: 21), suggests that the “politics of difference” is a formula for manufacturing conflict, because it rewards the groups that can most effectively mobilise to make claims on the polity, or ... [the] ethnocultural political entrepreneurs who can exploit its potential for their own ends by mobilising a constituency around a set of sectional demands’.

Barry (2001: 66, 294-305) argues that group rights grant those entrepreneurs ‘virtual carte blanche’ to define tradition and shape demands made on the wider polity, and that multiculturalist policies are the product of their collaboration with members of the national policy-making, administration and academic communities, plus ‘law schools, and private rights advocacy organisations’ (Epp in Barry 2001: 294). Moreover, the collaboration deliberately limits public debate. Consultation is largely restricted to minority leaders who have entrenched, politically self-interested positions, for whom the preservation of culture has become an end in itself. This renders members ‘mere cyphers, to be mobilised as instruments of [that] transcendent goal’, or restrained from dissent by the costs of exit (Barry 2001: 67, 148-54). The acquisition and exercise of group rights in this

manner is evidence for Offe (1998: 130) of 'significant control of social and political power', rather than the oppression and powerlessness performatively claimed as the route to group rights.

Some of this critique argues that by facilitating elite political appeals which are either incidental to, or at variance with, the interests of members, group-friendly policies contribute to the production of lop-sidedness. Politics which stress distinctiveness, 'victimisation and stylised marginality' (Gitlin 1995: 311) contradict the facts that many do not have a shared distinctive culture, their problems are not experienced in blanket fashion, nor are they necessarily tied to distinctive cultural expression. Moreover, many individuals desire self-development and integration into the wider society (Barry 2001: 75). In the multiculturalist accommodation, as in the 1991-92 Croat-Serbian war, the dialectic of policy and politics constitutes an 'ambiguous dialogue between myth and experience, fantasy and reality [and between the] ... political and ... personal ... planes of consciousness' (Ignatieff 1997: 36-7) which, there, led to a deadly lop-sided reality. Equivalent Quebeckan realities may lead to the break-up of the Canadian federation (Taylor 1991). Equivalent indigenous realities may be less dramatic, but as has been suggested nationally and as later chapters reveal in Tasmania, can have profoundly sapping life-long subjective, social and material consequences.

As well as revealing how difference-friendly policies and politics contribute to complexity, the literature cited above explains their counter-productivity. This is in terms of the 'backward-looking logic of compensation' (Offe 1998: 136) and its operationalisation of oppositional caricature and often mis-representation of individual members' lived realities. Such policies and politics very often politicise what would otherwise be abstract categories or ambiguous groupings, which then produce internal hierarchisation. As Shachar (1998, 2000, 2001) argues, this serves to entrench the binary opposition between culture and citizenship, implying that to be individuals and equal citizens, group members must leave their groups. The outcome is neither improved socio-economic conditions nor liberation from oppression but a paradoxical increased vulnerability to loss of rights, sanctioned by governmental non-intervention, itself justified by tolerance for 'private' cultural expression.

Similar diagnoses have been made of post-assimilationist policy in Australia. Recently, a number of journalists (Neill 2003; Rothwell 2006a, 2006d), ex-politicians (Johns 2001) and playwright Louis Nowra (2007), have joined scholars (Sutton 2001, 2005, 2008; Jarrett 2001, 2006) and Aboriginal spokespersons (Pearson 2000, 2001, 2003b, 2006b, 2007a, 2007b; Mundine 2005), in exposing the failure of current policy to improve Aboriginal well-being. They have highlighted substance abuse, sexual violence and social dysfunction, and declining health, literacy and numeracy.

Orthodox explanations for this evident failure stress the imperfect implementation of self-determination (see Behrendt 2001, 2006). Alternative explanations centre on an over-reliance on that approach, with the phalanx of problematics introduced in the first section of the chapter, including impoverished models of (Aboriginal) culture and identity, monolithic whiteness, binary difference, political entrepreneurs, cultural gatekeepers, ‘Koori-crats’ and resistance to cultural change. In the latter view, in domestic violence policy, dysfunction is in part a product of the rights agenda, because of its empowerment of elites who self-interestedly invent amenable tradition and coercively enrol individuals in it. Dysfunction is the product of the state’s effective sanctioning, through non-intervention, of prevailing norms and power relations in ‘Aboriginal “cultural” settings [which have an] underdeveloped notion of the individual right to physical safety ... in which violence is commonly regarded as “natural” and acceptable rather than aberrant’ (Jarrett 2001: 104). And it is the product of service delivery constrained by nepotism and localism. Jarrett argues (2001, 2006) that the orthodox approach elevates cultural rights over individual safety and places Aboriginal culture in the private sphere, effectively beyond the purview of public policy. Thus the state sanctions the dynamics which make the costs of exit prohibitive and freedom of choice chimerical, and so abrogates its duty to protect fundamental rights.

Some suggest that the same identity politics, sheeted home to public policy, contributes to Aboriginal disengagement from education and employment (Pearson 2000: 63) and the perpetuation of poverty and poor health (Gibson and Pearson 1987). Will Tyler (1994: 5) sees the complexities and tensions as related to ‘the disjunction between the [actual] social condition of Aboriginals and [the]

representations ... of the Aboriginal condition'. For instance, homelands based on imagined authority structures create new conflicts with the reality of mixed marriages and fluid and contested actual connections to place. He (1993, 1994) argues that in the mis-matched policy directions of individualistic modernising development and collectivist fiduciary concern, various elements of the discourse of Aboriginality combine to superimpose the unitary pre-modern, individualistic modern and hyperreal neo-tribal postmodern subject positions. This exaggerates the narcissism of minor differences, exacerbates the lop-sidedness of realities and has profoundly destabilising effects.

Attempts to develop policy apposite to complexity

These problems are leading political theorists to advocate a 're-universalised citizenship option' (Shachar 2001: 65) that would protect individuals from the inequalities imposed in the name of tradition. However, the recognition of individuals' multiple intersecting affiliations (including with the nation-state), that negotiation of the differences between those affiliations is the condition of individual identity (see Appiah 1994), and the danger of alienating individuals from some of their affiliations has driven the search in the direction of a 'third position' (Gitlin 1994: 318) which would accommodate cultural pluralism *and* citizenship.

Thus Appiah (2005, 2006) advocates a liberal cosmopolitanism which combines the imperatives of the universal and the particular: one, a concern for humanity, ties beyond the local and national citizenship, and obligations to others beyond 'kith and kind'; the other an interest in, and respect for, particular lives (2006: xv). This avoids the extremes of a singular universalism which 'abjures all local allegiances and partialities' (2006: xvi) and absolute communitarianism. It also implies understanding across cultural boundaries, and ethical tolerance for others and their cultural and affiliatory differences. Thus too, Ignatieff (1997: 63, 70) focuses on the individual differences within groups, because that reduces the dominance of the manufactured group homogeneity and the fusion of personal and group identity. He (1997: 60, original emphasis) proposes as a way to undercut the politics, 'empowerment that *individuates*, that allows individual members ... to articulate their own experiences'. Sen (2006) urges institutional support to boost

the individual capacity to understand and use reason in negotiating the intersections of multiple subjectivities and so to make possible multi-identity, multi-culturalism and multi-nationality. And Fukuyama (2006) proposes that more effort be put into more comprehensively integrating individuals in thin civic national cultures.

In more programmatic terms, many seek to counter-balance the power of the group with a curtailment of group excesses and facilitation of individual choice. Offe (1998: 130), for instance, would circumscribe the expansionary dynamic of group rights by requiring that each group be ‘authentic’, that is, have ‘a distinctive life form and the serious and lasting allegiance of most nominal members to it, without an excessive measure of fragmentation’. Barry (2001: 147) envisages public policy enhancing individuals’ capacity to move by ensuring that the choice to associate is voluntary, ‘well-informed ... [and] from a range of realistically available options’. Both he and Offe (1998: 134-35) would limit the reach of group rights according to a calculation of their full benefits and costs (including foregone opportunities and hostile reactions), and the use of expiration or review clauses for special concessions.

Others, notably Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2000), develop the notion of individual capacity-building to account for the differences of meaning and asymmetries of social structure and power that mean that mechanisms of resource redistribution and free choice are insufficient. Nussbaum advocates the nurturance of individual capabilities to realise different, culturally responsive conceptions of the good life (and contest others).

Where these theorists tend to underestimate the subtleties of individual/group identification, Ayelet Shachar (1998, 2000, 2001) does not. She is driven by the ‘ironic fact that individuals inside the group can be injured by the very reforms that are designed to promote their status as group members’ (2001: 3). Her model of differentiated citizenship strives to overcome ‘the “either/or” stalemate’ (2001: 118) of egalitarian and communitarian approaches by reducing ‘injustice *between* groups, together with the enhancement of justice *within* them’ (2001: 4, original emphases). The development she makes is to engage fully with the simultaneity of individuals’ multiple, equally important affiliations as members *and* citizens, their status as ‘citizen-insiders’ (2001: 6), ‘culture-bearers and rights-bearers’ (2001:

148), and her refusal to reduce complexity to easy oppositions. Having seen (with others like Habermas 1994: 114-15; James 1994; Okin 1997, 1998) the failure of multicultural accommodation in respect of minority women, the impracticality of the right of exit (2000: 79-80), and having rejected the binary between culture and rights, she (2001: 88-145) proposes a regime of ‘transformative accommodation’ via ‘joint governance’ arrangements. These are intended to protect cultural identities and empower individuals’ capacity to enjoy their multiple memberships *and* individuality as citizens. This is, in effect, an attempt to correct the lopsidedness of discrepant realities like those of migrants and Aborigines.

In her view, in order to succeed in this, the state must support only those group practices which support *all* members’ interests. It must invest in those members’ capacities to remain within the group and from there, acting as citizens, to change oppressive internal power relations. Negotiated joint governance arrangements would establish group and state jurisdictions in various ‘sub-matter’ aspects of contested social arenas such as family law and education. Neither partner would have a monopoly of authority, so the operation would depend on on-going dialogue between them. To empower members vis-à-vis their group(s), ‘reversal’ provisions would make available the option, according to the shifting and contingent emphases individuals place on group and citizen identity, of temporary selective disengagement from either source of authority, and appeal to the other for protection. This would create an incentive structure—‘each must earn the individuals’ continued attachment’ (2001: 149)—and by granting members the capacity to make ‘in-group subordination more costly to the group’ (Shachar 2001: 126), potentially facilitate a shift of power from elites to ordinary members. Shachar hopes partial withdrawal and conditional re-entry may make elites more accountable to their constituency and amenable to re-examination of discriminatory traditions and power relations.

This approach has influenced Duncan Ivison’s (2002) postcolonial liberal approach to Aboriginality. He proposes institutional mechanisms which tread a middle way between individualism and communitarianism, recognising the value of both indigenous rights and interests and normative principles of justice, nurturing social capabilities and aiming for a ‘complex’, ‘mutually acceptable coexistence’ (pp. 2, 30). His postcolonial liberalism is an always provisional

modus vivendi (pp. 74, 84-7) developing out of practical resolutions in local contexts, negotiated with indigenous people who have the ‘capability sets’ which flow from their rights to land, culture and self-government, and which enable as many as possible to ‘realise their effective freedom’ (p. 22). These features are for Ivison (2002: 135-36), critical to secure groupness, realise individuality as citizens and bring about internal liberalising change. Examples include the land use agreements made in response to the Native Title Act (p. 150), the balance of legislated self-government rights and access to the common law (pp. 152-53), the implementation of dual customary and Australian criminal law (pp. 155-58), and the mix of rights, capabilities and movement strategies needed to tackle welfare dependence (pp. 158-61).

Critique of these developments in respect of Aborigines

The models above are theoretical attempts to improve the liberal negotiation of cultural difference as ambiguous, simultaneous multiple affiliation which should account for individuals’ multiple intersecting affiliations. They suggest that the aims of indigenous people and the state may not be incommensurable and raise important issues, like Ivison’s (2002: 28) recognition that rights can counter-productively ‘freeze and even distort the conditions necessary for mutual accommodation and the working out of arrangements that promote ... “goodness of fit”’. Nonetheless, they remain inadequate in one way or another to the complexities of Aborigines’ ambiguous difference. Owing to their abstraction from actual lives, they default to functionalist models of culture and engage in only crude fashion with the everyday and the delicate, shifting balance between the dual planes of consciousness of the lop-sided reality.

Despite a deal of qualification, those of egalitarian disposition default to a too easy voluntarism and pay too little attention to the socio-political shaping of individuals’ capacities, desires and choices. They give adequate consideration neither to governmental nor small community normalising power, which can make membership all but involuntary and strategies of flexible entry and exit irrelevant. Given that ethnic, religious and national communities recruit, in part, by birth (Barry 2001: 148), provide deep meaning and identity, and subject individual members to the identity costs of exit, neither entry nor exit are matters of

voluntary choice, or where so, neither easy nor inconsequential. Barry (2001: 150, 70) seems relatively unconcerned about identity costs and does not accept the centrality of 'Anglo-Protestant culture' in public policy (see Fukuyama 2006: 13).

On the other hand, those more friendly to difference retain a too easy assumption that cultural hierarchy is imposed (see Ivison *et al.* 2002: 10) rather than also self-generated, alongside a stubborn faith (Brennan *et al.* 2003) in the rights agenda and self-determination. Though Ivison (2002: 86, 125) is sensitive to the problem of culturalism and the confusion between cultural loss and cultural change, he still thinks that:

Aboriginal rights are ... a complex bundle of capacities, both collective and individual, that enable indigenous people to live, as much as possible, according to their own customs and practices, and ... to negotiate the always-evolving interface between indigenous and non-indigenous worlds (2002: 161).

As so often, the reference point here is the classical aboriginality of Keesee or Sutton, not Métis or contemporary people. Aboriginality is insufficiently recognised as an ambiguous, performed 'floating signifier' (Tyler 1993: 326). The *local* on which Ivison's liberalism rests is always a remote, bounded local and an equal normative order (2002: 144). Barry (2001: 105) thinks similarly, that: [w]hat those who choose to identify with a Native American group want is to have a quite different set of options from those offered in the mainstream economy'. And Paul Havemann (1999a: 7) suggests:

Despite their cultural heterogeneity, indigenous peoples share an approach to political economy based on sustainability and a spiritual relationship between human beings and nature. Eco-indigeneity, reflecting this holistic approach, has come into continuous collision with the capitalist, anthropocentric approach of the settlers.

Thus, indigeneity remains resolutely different, discrete and solidary, despite peoples' participation in *real-politik* and their engagement in and desire 'to share more of the direct benefits of development' (Borrows 2001: 619-20).

Even Shachar (2001: 160-65) seems to assume that aboriginal communities are naturally institutionally complete social entities. Okin (1998: 662) elides complexity when, in agreeing with George Kateb's (1994) original statement, she

says that ‘the claims of women, gays and lesbians—and, I would add, members of minority racial groups—“grow out of something more real than [other groups] and they ‘struggle against, not in behalf of, fictions”’. Finally, Kymlicka (1989: 170-71) thinks of the indigenous as a rare case in which the trumping of individual rights may be acceptable (though he also, see 1995: 92, argues the need of structures to enhance peoples’ capacity to question traditional ways of life).

Remaining at a level that is distanced from the complexities of intersubjective reality (see Young 1990: 13; Tully 1995: 12), most analyses take the political discourse as sufficient. Kymlicka’s (1995: 10) national minorities for instance, ‘wish to maintain themselves as distinct societies alongside the majority culture’; Kateb’s (1994: 511) ‘people’ ‘demand that they be understood as group-members, as representatives of their groups’; and Ivison’s (2002: 152) ‘communities take responsibility’, tribes make decisions and traditions and philosophies engage but remain essentially unchanged. And Tully’s (1995: 24-9) indigeneity, though couched in discussion of the ambiguity of the *Haida Gwaii* canoe and arrived at through ‘millennia of overlapping interaction’, ‘interdependency’, and ‘criss-cross’, is nevertheless still singular and culturally distinct. In the intersection of *orders*, indigenous people engage with other cultures, but their essential nativeness continues.

But is it ordinary people who ‘demand’, or their spokespersons who represent them as doing so? Can minorities ‘wish’ or cultures always be ‘as they are’ (Tully 1995: 24)? Is it sensible to think of them interacting or having bias, given that ‘culture ... has no proper force of its own—it neither resists nor adapts [nor] assimilates’ (Wicker 1997: 41)? Is ‘distinct’ absolutely separate, or can it coexist on another plane of consciousness with cohabitation? Too little attention is paid to routine intersection and overlapping identifications. The notion of multiplicity captures little of the partiality, simultaneity and reversibility of multiple memberships. Texts refer to members as ‘insiders’ *or* ‘outsiders’ and to one-way and exclusive choices such as self-development *beyond* birth culture and the adoption of Western ways to imply the ‘disappearance of the group’s identity so that it ceases to function as a reference point’ (see Barry 2001: 72-3). Ivison (2002: 127) appears to see multiple identities colliding in additive or subtractive

ways and on the basis of a similar deep separability of distinct cultural worlds, Barry (2001: 95) is uncomfortable with the notion that:

[a]s full members of the larger society, [members of cultural minorities] have the option to participate to whatever degree they choose. They also may look inward, seeking solidarity within their cultural group, without being penalised for that choice.

It is the complexity of simultaneously 'looking inward' and outward to participate in wider society, of associating partially, serially and fluidly, with which many scholars are uncomfortable, as if the one need deny the other. It may, if so construed, but the mundane reality is of plenitude of identification with multiple, ambivalently bounded categories and groups. Nor, as the demotic discourse and behaviour of the black British demonstrate, must individuals' group loyalty compromise their citizenship. Not knowing this, it is impossible to theorise the full complexity of the indigenous relationship with the state, the complexities of the indigenous Self it creates and the implications of that complexity it visits upon individual Aborigines. Accordingly the various proposals are either under or over adapted to difference (Jarrett 2001).

Noel Pearson is one of the few in Australia to pay sustained attention to these dynamics of lop-sidedness, their genesis in progressive public policy and identity politics and their place in Aboriginal marginalisation. He acknowledges layered identities and syncretism (2006a, 2006b, 2006c), the strategic manipulation of the imagined Aboriginality for instrumental purposes (2007a) and the unthinking reproduction of that discourse by many in their daily social relations, which imposes upon them powerful pressures to constrain their behaviour to the image. He (Gibson and Pearson 1987) shows how educational success and good health become markers of whiteness and are therefore rejected. At the same time, he understands the need of the belonging, comfort and solidarity provided by those narratives (see Gitlin 1995: 309-10) and the dilemmas posed by their potential dissolution.

Importantly, he and the Cape York Institute are developing models which avoid simplistic default to either cultural rights or neo-liberal individualism (see Pearson 2000: 67-82; 2003a; 2007c). They advocate Aboriginal acceptance of responsibility and abandonment of victimhood but also demand government

investment in capacity building and true partnership. This is, Pearson knows (2007a; 2007c), a difficult position at the ‘radical centre’ which needs strong leadership, because the rights agenda and orthodox politics remain convincing to many, including young Aborigines. This is the position at which this thesis situates itself.

Education and complexity

The foregoing has outlined the main currents of scholarship regarding Aboriginality, the use of Aboriginality by administrators for conceptual and material control, adoption by Aboriginal political elites for leverage and institutionalisation in public policy. It has shown how policy is often inappropriate to minority individuals’ disparate realities and can become counter-productive. Education is at the centre of the constitution of the lop-sided reality and the problematic, and potentially at the centre of its resolution.

The educational orthodoxy

Peak Aboriginal representative bodies such as the National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC), key Aboriginal researchers (such as Paul Hughes 1981, 1984), and national statements such as the Adelaide and Hobart Declarations and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (NATSIEP) represent the dominant Aboriginal position with regard to Aboriginal education. They express the orthodox notion of Aboriginal sameness and difference, represent schooling as antithetical to continuing culture and propose that the key to educational success is accommodation of cultural particularity—as it manifests in learning styles, spatial facility, interests—and of their autonomy (see Hughes 1984; Budby and Foley 1998; Tamisari and Milmilany 2003; Hughes *et al.* 2004). Based on the argument that identity loss is a legacy of colonialism, the validation of culture inherent in self-determination is proposed as the way to build self-esteem and the confidence to engage with ‘alien’ knowledge, and thence to better educational outcomes. Some advocacy (see Hughes 1981, 1984, 2004) has asserted exclusive Aboriginal capacity to know, ownership of knowledge about, and authority to speak of, Aborigines. An element in this discourse (see Keeffe 1988; Folds 1987) valorises resistance as legitimate expression of Aboriginality.

This discourse dovetails with, and is a product of progressive research and wider educational discourse, which share the notions of Aboriginality and its incompatibility with formal education (RCAIDIC 1991a, 1991b; Partington 2002; Whatman and Duncan 2005). It holds that, as a matter of social justice and minority rights, adjustments should be made to education in order that it better accommodate cultural difference and that such adjustments will lead to improvements in Aboriginal attainment.

Thus, education authorities see Aboriginality 'as both the target of specific Aboriginal education programs and ... the means by which Aboriginal students could achieve success in schools' (Keeffe 1988: 68). Thus too, the Aboriginality of Arnhem Land (see Christie 1985; Harris 1990; Trugden 2000) is generalised so that Aboriginal students from 'Port Adelaide, Wollongong and Launceston' are perceived, expected to behave as and are taught as Aborigines (Hollinsworth 1992a: 145). Departments of education, regions and schools around the country facilitate Aboriginal communal and parental engagement in, and enhanced control of, their education. Those agencies implement policies of affirmative action to increase the number and accelerate the advancement of Aboriginal staff, and provide other staff with cross-cultural awareness and anti-racism training. They aim to 'enhanc[e] Aboriginal identity and self-esteem' (Hudspith and Williams 1994: **page**) and to empower Aboriginal students by Aboriginalising the curriculum (see Christie 1994; Morgan 1991) and teaching to difference (Tripcony 1995; Hudspith 1997; Partington *et al.* 1999; Stewart 1999). In Aboriginal Studies classes and cultural awareness camps (Keeffe 1988: 68-70), they teach Aboriginal students positive representations of Aboriginality and the history of its oppression. Remote schools implement 'culturally appropriate' bi-cultural, bilingual 'both ways' schooling (Harris 1980, 1990; Christie 1985), informing the approach to Aboriginal education around Australia, where best practice is to take advantage of putative cooperative learning styles and take a 'warm demanding' approach (Fanshaw 1999; Mellor and Corrigan 2004: 22-4).

Governing oppositions

This approach to Aboriginal education has led to some improvement in school attendance and retention, but it has not in the main led to improved outcomes

(Neill 2003; Nakata 2001: 95). Critical scholarship reveals the accommodation as a means of gaining normalising control of native peoples and making them into good citizen subjects (McLean 1995; Luke *et al.* 1993; Grant 1997).¹¹ It establishes and promotes through education a hierarchy of subject positions and equations and oppositions between them: notably authentic Aboriginality as an abnormal monolithic primitiveness, inferior and opposed to the educated subject, which is equated with normalcy, civilisation and whiteness. The ‘good student’ and intellectuality are equated with whiteness and made incompatible with nativeness (Grant 1997; Tilbury 1998, 2001). These positionings problematise the possibility of being both educated and Aboriginal.

In its general politics and as it applies to education, Aboriginal political discourse inverts the hierarchy by adopting the positive and using the pejorative elements of colonialist and assimilationist discourse to motivate and position the Aboriginal subject. It retains the binary distinction for its own purposes of control, nation-building and subjection. Thus it prescribes, as evidence of “true identity”, a restrictive set of ‘behaviour[s], work, interests, endeavours, ... ambitions, dreams, aspirations’, and ‘dress[es] up anti-intellectualism and apathy as Aboriginal culture and the “blackfella way”’ (Pearson 2000: 63). But in doing so it reinforces, and further enmeshes Aboriginal individuals within, the oppositional governing logic. It equates Aboriginal subjecthood with victimhood, and is at best ‘equivocal’ (Pearson 2000: 62) about the relationship between indigeneity and education. It stifles students’ ‘autonomy, individuality and creativity’ (Pearson 2000: 63) and locks them out of intellectual and social development beyond the authorised Aboriginality. The politics then, serves to magnify the governing dilemma or double bind.¹²

This is a marginalising and subsequently self-marginalising trap of imagined authenticity. Moreover, it is constructed in the face of contemporary Aboriginal students’ actual departure from the type. The so-called White and Aboriginal

¹¹ This is consistent with the subjection of other populations. Through the organisation of space, time, routine and dress (Meadmore and Symes 1996), schooling constructs childhood, national identity and sexuality; see Israeli 1989; Ball 1990; Tamir 1992; Meredyth and Tyler 1993; Grundy 1994; Kirvinen and Rinne 1998; Middleton 1998; McLeod 1998; Popkewitz and Brennan 1998.

¹² The ‘double bind’ in education was noted by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody; it refers to the notion that though both are necessary to Aboriginal social health, mainstream education and traditional culture are incompatible opposites. See Chapter Eight, pp. 243-44.

domains, thought to be separable, are internally differentiated and radically intersected (see McConvell 1994; Folds 1992), and individual participants in those domains are also immersed in global flows (Pearson 2000: 63; Nakata 2001: 94). They learn in the range of human ways, live diverse contemporary lives (Nicholls *et al.* 1995) and are capable of mastering English as well as vernacular language (Nakata 2000, 2002).

Despite their heterodox lived reality, the orthodoxy continues, overlaying and infiltrating it, making education another site of the imagining into being of the phantasmatic Aboriginality and lop-sided reality and contributor to the complexities and problematics which attend it. The combination of normalising pressure in progressive education and normative Aboriginalising pressure in the politics produces a reality more authoritative than discrepant demotic realities.

Accordingly, education institutionalises expectations which may be appropriate to the imagined, but are inappropriate to lived Aboriginality. Progressive attempts to respond positively to Aboriginality do not dislodge, but secure, the commonplace employment of notions of blood and descent, description of Aboriginal experience, culture and identity in essentialised ways, and the assertion 'that only Aboriginal people can and should research, write or teach about Aboriginal subjects' (see Hollinsworth 1992d: unpaginated). Anti-racist teaching can re-impose normative Aboriginality with racist effect (Hollinsworth 1992b). And Aboriginal students are torn between competing authoritative discourses, one extolling them to be authentic and therefore not intellectual, the other urging them to be participatory citizens and therefore to cultural inauthenticity. The import is that they can be either real Aborigines or educated, participatory citizens, but not both, which can produce disengagement (see Gibson and Pearson 1987; Pearson 2000).

Efforts at reform following this critique exhibit the main ideological and political faultline of the multicultural accommodation. Progressive educators and activists retain their faith in the notion of external cause and inadequacy of response to difference, while conservatives retain their faith in public neutrality and personal responsibility. The former advocate better consultation, teacher training and greater cultural validation and autonomy, while the latter advocate mainstreaming and individualised citizenship (see Schwab and Sutherland 2001;

Novak 2006; Hughes 2007; Hughes and Warin 2005: 15-17). Both inadequately address, and remain within, the dilemma: the former privilege the orthodox Aboriginality that marginalises Aborigines while the latter ignore the structural asymmetry that marginalises. In the event, critique is made impossible, non-indigenous teachers opt out (Hollinsworth 1995: 92), and the status quo continues.

Emerging transcendence of the dilemma

Some researchers, informed by poststructuralist, postmodernist, feminist and postcolonial theorising (for example, Giroux 1983, 1991; Lather 1991; McLaren 1995), are working at an educational ‘radical centre’ which conceptually dissolves, and has the potential to help Aborigines actually resolve, the orthodox dilemma. They recognise the reality of cultural intersection and transformation and subjective complexity. They accept that oppressive structures continue, and that they pose difficulties for individuals, who must negotiate and transcend them. These researchers eschew simplistic communitarian or individualist responses, and aim instead at an education which is appropriate to, moderates the construction of, and builds individuals’ capacities to manage, cultural and identity complexity.

Kevin Kumashiro (2000a: 26) acknowledges the subjective mixedness and ambiguity of ‘students of colour, students from under or unemployed families, students who are female, or male but not stereotypically “masculine”, and students who are, or are perceived to be, queer.’ Others also consider the negotiation of ambiguous identities in educational settings. Examples include *différently* Jewish teachers who work, and must negotiate their relations across difference in, non-denominational schools (Haynes 2003); queer youth of colour who also identify as Native, and so stand at a blurred fluxion of multiple axes of difference, even as each is ‘profoundly formative’ (Scholl 2002: 141); and Sikh-American students who accommodate but do not assimilate (Gibson 1988). These studies confirm the commonplaces of both ‘shifting mosaic’ complexity (Horn 2003) and the “‘pratique de *métissage*’” (Lionnet 1989: 96) that is required to negotiate it.

Like Pearson, indigenous academic Martin Nakata (2001, 2002, 2007) is cognisant of equivalent indigenous complexity and its relevance to education. He is concerned about Torres Strait Islanders’ capacity to be both culturally

distinctive and citizens, and is critical of the status quo of narrow culturalism, culturally appropriate programs and identity politics which make that doubleness so difficult. He does not accept that education for the latter must erode the former, and is in no doubt that the way to achieve that desired state is via a rigorous, supportive, standard education and explicit engagement with the cultural complexity that Torres Strait Islanders *do* everyday. As the theorists of the African diaspora, he sees the future in the reality of a persisting but changing and adapting culture. Other signs of the same cognisance include Hollinsworth's stress on the relationality of Aboriginality (1992a, 1992b, 1992c, 1992d, 1995) and Aboriginal educator Chris Sarra's (2003) rhetorical transcendence of the opposition between Aboriginality and intellectualism with his mantra of 'young and black and deadly', and 'strong and smart'.

These are signs of movement in Australian indigenous education towards the emancipatory pedagogy foreshadowed by Ellen Swartz's (1996) critical reading of normative American history and progressed by Kumashiro (2000a, 2001, 2002a) and the contributors to his (2002) edited collection. They work on an education which takes comprehensive complexity seriously. Kumashiro (2001) criticises anti-oppressive teaching which simply adds a sample of excluded others to the privileged normalcy, on the grounds that it does not deal adequately with ubiquitous differentiation and indivisible complexity, authorises minority normativity and discrimination against their margins, and does nothing to change the normal.

He (2000b, 2004, 2006) advocates a mix of 'commonsensical' and 'paradoxical' teaching that teaches *and* troubles established texts, knowledges, categories, stereotypes and frameworks. For him (2001: 5-7), it is critical that students know those knowledges, majority *and* minority, each for its own value, but also know that none can be a literal representation or transparent, stable mirror of reality. Students should become expert in the normative mathematics, science, academic writing and the like, but also develop the 'critical reading capacities' to unlearn them, to avoid the state at which they become natural or taken for granted. They must consciously know them for what they are—normative cultural artefacts—with all their powers and traps. The end he envisages is the capacity to

enact *métissage* and with that, greater personal autonomy. This fits with Sen's (2006: 160, 162) critical education leading to 'examined lives'.

This aim also fits with the New London group's 'multiliteracies pedagogy' (Cope and Kalantzis 2000) with which Nakata is involved. The project is dedicated to equipping all, but especially minority students with the capacities to participate fully in the dominant culture and to sustain changing same particularities. It proposes an 'epistemology of pluralism' (Cazden *et al.* 1996: 72) that may be developed through a four-tiered pedagogy including: experiential immersion to develop meaning and intuitive expertise (say of languages, cultures and discourses); overt teacher instruction to develop conscious meta-level awareness (say of cultural differences); critical reflection to denaturalise social contexts; and extension to learn to abstract principles from situated practice and apply learned capacities in novel situations (Cope and Kalantzis 2000: 30-6). This pedagogical structure ideally equips individuals with the capacities to critically examine the discourses which subject them and to navigate with agency the choices they impress upon them.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered what is known of Aboriginal identity complexity. The story it tells is that the perception of Aboriginality has been dominated by scholarly, administrative and Aboriginal notions of cultural distinctiveness. This perception has persisted even as Aboriginal cultures have changed over time, indeed the more the reality has changed, the more the perception has been elaborated. This has established a lop-sided lived reality that problematises Aborigines' lived realities. This situation is the outcome of the variously unconscious, accidental, unavoidable and self-interested Aboriginal responses to the inducements provided by progressive public policy and scholarship. The collective Aboriginal response has been useful politically, but led to the institutionalisation of identity dynamics with problematic individual consequences, which recent reforms have failed to remedy. This pattern is evident in education.

These conclusions constitute the points of departure for this thesis, and inform its exploration of the precise workings, effects and consequences of these

dynamics, initially in Tasmania and subsequently more widely. The research is particularly interested in those aspects of the dynamics which are hidden, resisted and not fully developed in this literature, including the dialectical formation of the imagined Aboriginality, the agonistic relationship between that and the profusion of everyday lived Aboriginalities, the impacts of the dynamics on individuals, and the ways that individuals negotiate them. The succeeding two chapters outline the theoretical and methodological frameworks with which these tasks are tackled, Chapter Two focusing on the processes of individual negotiation of discursive subjection that produce subjective ambiguity, and Chapter Three the processes through which the full complexity of Aboriginal lives and selves may be gradually revealed.

Chapter 2 The Ambiguous Subaltern Self

Introduction

Aboriginal Tasmanians are immersed, as citizens marked by race/ethnicity, in a 'white settler dominion' (Fleras 1999) and so in the profound social and cultural transformations of the contemporary postmodernising, or (Touraine in McDonald 1999: 5-6) *demodernising*, *deinstitutionalising* and *desocialising* condition. This condition is associated with the move from industrial to postindustrial societies, in which it is argued that the integrative role of national social institutions through socialisation and norm transmission is diminished. Multinational capital and global neoliberalism permit flexible finance and labour, destabilising employment and undermining national autonomy and all collectivities (Bourdieu in Moreiras 2001: 268-71). Global consumer culture and mediated interconnection leads to the relativising and questioning of modernist universal standards and foundational certainties (Waters 1995, Lyotard 1984). National societies increasingly appear as a patchwork of microcultures (Maffesoli 1996; see also Maffesoli 1988) in which shared social life is dominated by a hyperreal world of signs, symbols and mythologies which no longer represent an underlying reality, but reflect on each other; social interactions occur on the basis of images and models created in an autonomous cultural sphere (Baudrillard 1998).

Of course, this is not a complete schism from earlier times. The modernist industrial world remains alongside the postindustrial and postmodern, and so the contemporary period is characterised by intertwined, contradictory and unpredictable social forces, as for example the simultaneous dynamics of homogenisation, localisation and hybridisation, or hyper-differentiation and de-differentiation (see Crook *et al.* 1992: 26-41; Lash 1990a). This set of disembedding dynamics has led to predictions of the death of authentic ties between people (Baudrillard 1998), disconnection from collective histories and identities (Jameson 1984) and a heightened attentiveness to local particularity, minority culture and the self (Lemert 1997: 35, 128).

Individuals are said to suffer from a number of pathologies of the self, including confusion, superficiality, narcissism, fragmentation, insecurity and anxiety (see Jameson 1984; Giddens 1991; Bradley 1996; Elliott 2001: 136). And

even as they face the dilemmas of the times deprived of ‘the comfort of the universal guidance that modern self-confidence once promised’, the ‘fullness of moral choice and responsibility’ is paradoxically restored to them (Bauman 1992: xxii). They are called upon to take responsibility for cultivating and continually transforming, to be ‘entrepreneurs of the self’ (Ehrenberg in McDonald 1999: 6, 208-09) and so to mobilise their own subjectivity as a resource in achieving the liberatory possibilities of the contemporary moment.

This thesis takes a poststructuralist approach, inspired by Foucault’s analysis of discourse and power and Derrida’s of sameness and difference, to an examination of the subjects these conditions produce. The approach draws on postcolonial, feminist and queer theorising that argues that both conditions and subjects are artefacts of modernist attempts to engineer homogeneous and ordered societies through universal truths and classificatory divisions (see Bauman 1991; 2001: 201). The approach conceptualises the self as a ‘signifier at play in cultural fields rather than as a biological or psychological quality’ (Smith 2001: 242), and for the colonised, the cultural fields which have historically and continue to constitute them are those of the colonial and modern periods of Western dominance, as well as the contemporary globalising/postmodernising period. Within this focus, the conceptual framework recognises the place of individual agency in the performative construction of a coherent self through the negotiation of relationships with power, discourse, social institutions and other individuals.

These themes structure the chapter. The first section uses Foucault’s notion of ‘liberal governmentality’ (1979b) to outline the discursive and material practices through which the liberal state constructs a normalised population. This section also considers the political discourses of the subjects constituted in the process, in particular their assertion of solidary difference. The second section focuses on the individual construction of self through mundane social interaction in these circumstances. It adopts the symbolic interactionist understanding (Mead 1974; Blumer 1969) of individuals as cognitive beings with the capacity to realise their imagined selves via creative negotiation of the social order. Specifically, it uses Goffman’s (1969a) ‘dramaturgical’ and Butler’s (1999) ‘performative’ notions of agentic self-formation, and the contribution of such agency to the continuity and transformation of the social order itself.

That second section links the previous and following sections. In adopting the interactionist stance that ‘ordinary interaction is all that there is’ to explain the emergence of social forms (Thiele 2005b: 4), it critiques the inclination to transcendence in the politics of the nation state and subaltern difference. And in introducing the dialogue between individual and society in the production of self, it progresses the analysis of identity complexity which is developed further in the following section. The final section embraces Derrida’s (1978, 1982, 1987) problematisation of the boundedness of foundational binarisms in which identity is antithetical to difference. This builds more complex models of identity and difference as mutually imbricated, of relationships of sameness as differentiated rather than solidary, of difference as inclusive rather than discrete, and of the quotidian reality of identity heterogeneity, hybridity and ambivalence. The section and chapter concludes with these understandings as they are appropriated to postcolonial use by Stuart Hall (1987, 1988, 1991b).

The discursive constitution of Same and Other

Much French poststructuralism has sought to identify the linguistic and cultural foundations, discursive regimes and administrative technologies by which post-Enlightenment Western European societies established nation-states, homogeneous national populations and social order. It has critiqued the universalistic pretensions of Enlightenment discourses and linguistic structures, in particular the foundational binarisms between reason and emotion, mind and body, truth and falsity, civilisation and savagery and the like. It argues that metanarratives such as scientific knowledge have played a central role in the shaping of certainty, coherence, order, stability and the formation of the contemporary subject.

Michel Foucault was interested in those foundational ‘truths’ (1970, 1972) but with *Birth of the Clinic* (1973) he turned his attention to the ways in which those truths were applied to the government of populations. He focused on the speaking, labouring and living subject as the central technology of that government (1982: 777-78). As the object of power and knowledge, the subject is rendered amenable to external and self-government. The meaning of government he adopted

combines an earlier broad social meaning and a more restricted modern political meaning. The former referred to:

the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed: the government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick. It ... [covered] modes of action, more or less considered or calculated, which were destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people. To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others (Foucault 1982: 790).

The more restricted meaning refers to government in the political domain and through the agencies of the state, in its concern with the mode of being of its citizens (1982: 793). This form of government combines the models of ancient Greek juridico-legal citizenship, church pastoral care and nineteenth-century police micro-regulation, and seeks to simultaneously maximise the capacities of individuals to contribute to the national wealth and good order and care for their welfare. For Foucault, the contemporary liberal ‘art of governing’ has developed the intellectual and practical technologies and mechanics of power to achieve those contradictory ends.

The art of that government is to produce a citizenry of self-regulating, self-normalising subjects through the ‘tricky combination in the same political structures of individualisation techniques and of totalisation procedures’ (Foucault 1982: 782; see also 1990: 71; 1979a: 143; 1979b: 17-18). For Foucault, ideal subjects and populations are formed in an integrated three-fold process. They are formed in the domain of the everyday social, where certain truths of existence, based in scientific classification, are discursively constituted as normal, and alternative knowledges and subjectivities are constituted as naive, inferior and problematic. In the first of two phases of political government, they are formed through the social institutions and agencies of the state, which translate that normal into policy, program and practice via the expertise of the scientific disciplines. They are finally formed through the subject’s own self-subjecting action, framed and guided by the governing technologies that provide the conditions of possibility within which the subject acts.

The human sciences are at the root of the constitution of what is taken for granted as normality, abnormality and difference (Foucault 1991a). These sciences

are the authorised discourses which embody the West's 'will to know' (Sheridan 1980), to find the origins, truth or essence of man, to identify general laws and abstract principles, and to impose classificatory order and teleological sequence on the world. They also signify the belief that universal, transcendental and certain truths are to be found through the application of reason. Knowledge produced in this way is regarded as 'true' discourse, able to pronounce truth as of right, without need of further justification (see Foucault 1972: 218-19, 234). It invents man as a knowable entity (1977a: 193-94) and unitary subject (1970: 194), endowed with innate properties such as human nature and rationality, inalienable freedom and rights.

Such notions are not though, the products of a universal or disinterested system of thought, but more the arbitrary products of the particular system of thought which has come to dominate alternatives and produce what can be said, seen and known. They are the product of discourse, which Foucault perceives as 'a violence we do to things, ... a practice we impose upon them' (1972: 229) in the interests of order and control. Dominant discourses are the outcome of a 'prodigious machinery' (Foucault 1972: 220), a complex web of exclusions and controls which regulate what can be said and accessed, in what form, by whom, under what conditions and with what success.

The outcome is not the revelation of immanent and universal truth but the constitution of particular truth in the form of normalcy and normal subjects, those who labour productively, are healthy, sane and have a true—either male or female—sex and sexuality. The distinguishing activity of the will to know captures or, according to Foucault (1979a: 154) 'group[s] together under [a] unity', certain properties and subjects as ideal points or principles of normality, and in order to do so, constitutes their less-than-normal counterparts, the idle, sick, mad and 'numberless family of perverts' (1979a: 40). It positively invents and constitutes knowledges, discourses, voices and subjects as binary opposites of true discourse and ideal subjects. In the case of madness, for example, the will to truth separated out from reason many disparate alternative rationalities and individuals, which previously existed in undifferentiated and accepted forms and consolidated discrete unitary worlds of reason and unreason, such that madness

became a fact, subject to exclusion. Insanity was not so much discovered as produced (see Sheridan 1980: 27).

The will to truth seeks to know, produce and gain mastery over all such ‘unruly’ or ambiguous populations and subjects. Bourgeois hegemony with regard to sexuality (see Foucault 1979a) for example, was built on the proliferation of discourse about sex, the production of myriad sexual abnormalities, neuroses, aberrations and inadequacies. The same hegemony more generally was built on the marginalising or silencing of a ‘whole set of knowledges’ and subjectivities (such as those of the insane, sick or delinquent), which were ‘disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity’ (Foucault 1980a: 82). Social order is achieved then, via acts of classification, constitution and exclusion. The discursive machinery privileges some knowledge and renders other inadmissible, as if it belonged to a ‘world of chimera or reverie’ (1972: 223), beyond sensible consideration.

These are the dynamics of government by knowledge, which authoritatively constitute a regime of internally coherent, oppositionally and hierarchically ordered, normal and anomalous subject categories. This form of government produces truths of the subject—statements and beliefs about who and what we are—establishes normality in terms of definitions of fairness, health, wealth, success and decency; moral codes, tastes and manners; norms, expectations, conventions, orthodoxies and perceptions, which come to be considered self-evident, common-sensical and natural. It and they establish accepted subject positions to which individuals are assigned, or by reference to which they are defined as anomalous—divergent, transgressive or ambiguous—in which case they are judged as odd, unnatural, problematic and/or unruly, and so invite the exercise of normalising pressures in the power relations of everyday social interaction.

Discursive subjection was institutionalised in the nineteenth-century carceral institutions of the prison, hospital, asylum, barracks, factory and school, in which normality was married with disciplinary techniques to effect the normalisation and regulation of society and individuals as subjects (Foucault 1977a). In them, the experts in the scientific discourses, the doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists and

teachers, then and now, codify normality in administrative definition, policy, program and procedure, authoritatively ‘render[ing] the objects of government in a language that makes them governable’ (Dean 1994a: 187). They establish administrative categories and stereotypical properties as quantifiable norms and adopt a series of ‘dividing practices’ to identify, categorise and separate out each individual, with intent to normalise, to produce a population of active, productive subjects (Sheridan 1980: 219) who are at the same time ‘legible and docile’ (Foucault 1977a: 188).

The administering institutions above do so by means of constant observation, which allows them to mobilise the ‘power of the Norm’, to compare, differentiate, hierarchise, homogenise, judge and exclude in ways which induce individuals to acquire desired behaviours and aptitudes and become like one another (see Foucault 1977a: 182-83). Their specific architecture (1977a: 195-228) permits a constant supervisory surveillance and hence discipline to be exercised largely invisibly, ‘without recourse, in principle at least, to excess, force or violence’ (1977a: 177). In these institutions the examination is central to the collection of observational data and they become apparatuses of almost perpetual examination, providing the knowledge by which individuals are transformed into fields of knowledge, ‘effect and object of power’ (Foucault 1977a: 192).

The knowledge gained is recorded and permits the development of standards, rankings and norms which in turn act as rules or laws against which individuals are measured, judgements of their potential to achieve normalcy made and expectations voiced. The norms are used to develop specific programs and regulations, while a micro-penalty (1977a: 178) defines and regulates behaviours in relation to time, activity, speech, behaviours, bodily dispositions and habits. Rewards and punishments, for example for reaching required levels of performance, trap every person in a ‘punishing universality’ (1977a: 178). In these ways, Foucault says, normalcy is institutionalised as an instrument of coercion in national education, health and industrial systems (1977a: 184).

The mass of information allows individuality to become an analysable and measurable object, no longer beyond description (see Foucault 1977a: 183-90). The individual is tied to his/her individuality, compared with others and the standardised reference point of the norm. This locates just what needs to be

corrected, trained or reformed in each individual, to what extent and by what means. The school, for instance, ‘distribute[s] pupils according to their aptitudes and their conduct ... [and] exercise[s] over them a constant pressure to conform to the same model’ (1977a: 182).

As well as individualising then, disciplinary subjection hierarchises acts and subjects around the norm. The rule of the norm enables the identification of certain categories which can be objectively known as marginal, irregular, unruly or dangerous, potential perturbers of the social whole. That rule enables the design of normalising interventions intended to incorporate all, but especially anomalous individuals and categories such as the working classes within the normal (Foucault 1985: 2).

Insofar as the disciplinary project succeeds, it produces subjects whose capacities for exercising freedom are maximised, and both subjects and capacities must then be regulated or governed by a ‘subtle direction and shaping of conduct’ (Dean 1994b: 162; 1994a: 177-78). The focus of Foucault’s final mode of government is on the extent to which human beings are active in constituting themselves as subjects of freedom. The technologies of the self are the actions one takes on one’s self ‘by which one tries to work out, to transform one’s self and to attain a certain mode of being’ (Foucault 1991c: 2), to know one’s self more fully and have the type of relationship one ought to have with one’s self.

While individuals may experience these processes of self-creation as exercises of autonomous individual freedom, they are not so, for they take place within relations of power that frame the conditions of possibility for that freedom. Those conditions are the ‘patterns that [the individual] finds in his culture and ... are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group’ (Foucault 1991c: 11). They include attitudes and behaviours, beliefs, goals, perceptions of ways of being and understandings of the self including, for example, the very notion that there is a real but hidden self, to be struggled over and improved upon. They propose what is right and wrong, natural and less than natural, human and less than human.

These patterns are based on the model of the human which has ‘become normative, self-evident and is supposed to be universal’ (Foucault, cited in Martin 1988: 15). This final phase of government, acting upon ‘acting subjects’, is at the

heart of the liberal conception of government, since it provides broad normative conditions of possibility within which each individual is free to ‘constitute, positively, a new self’ (Foucault 1988c: 49). The exercise of this freedom is a matter of ethics, because it is an exercise of power relations in respect of others’ equivalent freedom. Ethical self-government implies then, the limiting of one’s power in respect of others (see Foucault 1991c: 4-5), and with that internal debate and decision-making on matters of individual conscience. Foucault proposes that power/knowledge again governs here, constructing the conscience or soul which conducts the conduct of this internal debate (1977a: 29-31). The soul constitutes a part of the body set against itself, and, to the extent that man has a soul, power need not be applied from the outside. As an internal other and normative reference point, ‘a sort of quasi-subject which reigns supremely in you’,¹ the soul represents the self one desires to be, the ideal model to which one aspires and towards which one labours.

This government of individuals’ ethical self-government and social government is achieved via the confession and examination. Evolved from the Christian tradition of verbalisation, and now widely used in psychiatry, pedagogy, social science, medicine and the law, in this technology individuals examine their consciousness and soul, tell the truth of their selves, reveal their desires, fears and secret practices. Revelation is elicited and analysis conducted by authoritative others, experts, to whom one confesses, in person or symbolically. Their advice problematises individuals’ selfhood and helps them to identify ethical incompleteness and analyse the truth about the self. It permits judgement and provides courses of action to correct failings, improve the self or become complete (Foucault 1988c: 49).

Thus individuals are seduced into constant exposure and translation of the body, soul and desire into discourse, and become invisibly enmeshed in relations of power. Their talk is the basis of the special knowledges and systems of classification which open up human life to capture, measurement, analysis and regulation, all of which is held by experts whose role is to decipher what is said and return truth in the form of interpretation (see Foucault 1979a: 53-70). Insofar

¹ This was a suggestion put to Foucault by an interviewer, with which he agreed; see Foucault 1991a: 5-6.

as this technology is adopted as taken for granted practice power subjects surreptitiously, hidden by the proposition that this is a matter of free choice, whereas the free subject is, as Dean (1994b: 163) says, ‘not an individual existing in an essential space of freedom, but one whose subjection is consistent with forms of choice.’ Along with positive rather than implacably negative or repressive power, this element of choice within constraining conditions of possibility is the essence of liberal subjection.

Resistance: the inversion of hierarchy by identity politics

Foucault’s work exposed the regimes of discourse, power and institutional practice by which social and cultural order has been constituted and naturalised in the West. Central to this was its placement of universal Man—male, heterosexual, white and able-bodied—at the apex of a hierarchy of idealised subjects which dichotomises, inferiorises and marginalises the poor, female, homosexual and non-West. Second wave feminist and poststructuralist gay and lesbian theorising reworked his analysis to identify the existence of a patriarchal gender code, the masculine/feminine binary and a sexual code, the hetero/homosexual binary, which dominate the texture of social life, institutionalise certain social relations and impose what Seidman (1997: 157) calls a ‘monumental constriction’ and ‘immense condensation’ of the possibilities of gender and sexual expression.

Postcolonial theory has identified a similar invention and homogenisation of race/ethnicity through discursive and disciplinary imagination, incitation, interdiction and conditional choice. Bhabha (for example 1994: 32, 229) argues that the colonising West achieved social order and control by the establishment of ‘universal’ ethical codes, standards of truth, justice and reason in the name of cultural diversity and pluralism. Frantz Fanon (1967; 1970a; 1970b; 1986), Albert Memmi (1965), Ashis Nandy (1983) and Edward Said (1979) showed how colonial hegemony was cemented through a series of binary oppositions that contrasted the rational West with the irrational, sexual, childlike and non-masculine East. They theorised the colonial encounter as one in which the colonisers established and justified colonial rule by constituting the colonized as its degenerate Other. The encounter produced ‘enduring hierarchies of subjects and knowledges [including] the coloniser and the colonised, the Occidental and

the Oriental, the civilized and the primitive, the scientific and the superstitious, the developed and the developing' (Prakash 1995: 3). It produced 'Europe's inferior Others' (Said 1989: 210), variously mentally deficient and lacking maturity (Nandy 1983), the 'passive object of discursive domination' (Parry 1987: 40), a 'white man's artifact' (Fanon 1986: 16), consigned to barbarism and bestiality (Fanon 1967: 169) and saddled with a 'dreadful secondariness' (Said 1989: 207).

But as Foucault's capillary and relational notion of power (1979a: 92-102) suggests, such positioning is always tenuous and minority voices have collectively resisted their subjugation by forming social movements which assert a particularistic difference and universalistic equality. As the basis of claims for recognition, rights and social inclusion, they have asserted a unitary political identity, whether female, homosexual/lesbian or native. Liberal feminists sought equality as humans within the dominant universalism, while socialist and radical feminists sought liberation from what they saw as universal structures of women's oppression and exploitation. The dominant logic of mainstream lesbian and gay politics has been to de-pathologise and establish the legitimacy and naturalness of homosexuality, to contest 'stereotypes of homosexuality, not the notion that "the homosexual" is a distinct human type' (Seidman 1997: 139).

Postcolonial politics in anti-colonial and nationalist guise sought a therapeutic recovery of native adult-hood and human-ness from its colonial debasement and mounted emancipatory programs founded on nativist national consciousness and pride. Resistance to colonial inferiorisation was based in a reclamation of 'traditions, histories and cultures from imperialism' (Said 1989: 219) and a counter-valorisation of a 'unified revolutionary Self' (see Parry 1987: 30). Though recognising its dangers, Fanon (1967) accepted the need for subaltern rehabilitation via national consciousness and solidarity as of at least transitional value. He supported the rehabilitation and restoration of lost dignity to the Negro, and the image of collective social cohesion and 'the integrated self in vital interactions with an authentic cultural community' (Parry 1987: 46-7).

These politics have provided the grounds on which rights claims have been made in the constitutional democracies and oppressive colonial regimes overthrown. But, insofar as they sustain the foundational fictions of a

prediscursive self, monolithic collective subject and utopian myth of emancipation, they represent further ‘instantiation[s] of the “modernist” impulse’ (Barrett and Phillips 1992: 2). They adopt the classical liberal notion of a substantive subject with innate properties and a negative or juridical notion of power (see Butler 1999: 4-5). They privilege a single aspect of the individual’s ensemble of subject positions, reify and represent it as if it accounts for the whole person and therefore de-emphasise or exclude other selves. And they demand oppositionality, with each selected identifier discursively constituted in opposition to one or several of the others.

As a consequence, each of these movements has tended to lock subjective possibilities into the two unified subjects proposed by the governing binaries. The inversion of the hierarchy retains the binary logic. The assumption of juridical power ignores the positively productive power which produces and naturalises the very subject the politics represents, and so quarantines from critique that power and its mechanisms of subjection (see Seidman 1997: 147). So-called liberation serves to enmesh the minority subject further in webs of power, similar to those surrounding sex (see Foucault 1979a) and, in sustaining a collective group identity via disciplinary normalising practices, the politics submerge their members’ actual multiplicity of subject positions and constrain their individuation within the group. Thus, mainstream feminist politics has paid scant attention to class, race/ethnicity and alternative sexualities, and mainstream gay and lesbian politics is criticised as ‘hetero-imitative’ (Seidman 1997: 146).

Later postcolonial theorising has recognised these shortcomings as they manifest in the essentialist nativism of nationalist politics. Said (1989: 225) says that ‘nationalism, for all its obvious necessity, is also the enemy’, both in holding to the ‘fiction of *total* independence’ (Said 1993: 20, original emphasis) and in its ‘defensive, reactive and even paranoid’ (Said 1993: xxix) aspect, which ‘gives rise to and encourages the politics of blame ... and an even more destructive politics of confrontation and hostility’ (Said 1993: 19). In decolonised states, such politics can lead to the same normalising, exclusionary and coercive mechanisms as those of the departed masters (Said 1993: 20). And for Fanon (1967: 171), Negritude’s ‘unconditional affirmation of African culture succeeds’ in reversing the racialised prejudices embodied in ‘the unconditional affirmation of European culture.’

Rather than delivering real-life “polymorphous native difference”, such a politics of difference can instead lock the decolonised into repressed heterogeneity (Parry 1987: 28) and problematise life for those who ‘quote Montesquieu’ or are lighter skinned (see Fanon 1986: 35, 43-50).

These politics replicate the normative codes and stabilise the master social regime those codes construct. Insofar as they retain the model of discrete group, monolithic difference and totalising identity, they reinscribe the oppositions that marginalise them. As Bhabha (1994: 72) says in critiquing Said’s *Orientalism*, and Butler (1999: 5) says of feminist politics, they are self-defeating. Furthermore, in attempting to control subjective and political heterogeneity and ambivalence on the basis of fictive selves and mythologised versions of the past (see Said 1979), they add layers of imagery and desire to the virtualised ‘neo-reality’ of postmodern culture (Baudrillard 1998). They enhance the polarisation of social forces, compound the confusing turbulence which characterises the contemporary period and feed the pathologisation of the self with which individuals are confronted.

The individual accomplishment of self

These social dynamics provide subalterns with a number of congenial and incompatible imaginary subject positions, one of which is as the ‘cognitive ..., self-monitoring, risk-evaluating ... strategically-acting subject’ of choice (McDonald 1999: 208). To avoid being determined by these dynamics, with their attendant threat of destabilisation, individuals must take responsibility for their own agentic subjectivation. In order to do so, to ‘construct a coherent and unified experience’ (McDonald 1999: 6) of self, they must hold the disparate logics in a relation and at a distance such that they can appropriate and navigate them in a managed way and identify across them.

This is a task to which each brings a more or less well-developed reflexive awareness and range of symbolic resources. Where the normal or ‘default’ identities of the white heterosexual and able bodied male can afford to be less than fully self-conscious as a ‘privilege of power’ (Kitzinger and Wilkinson 1993: 32), reflexive capacities to negotiate a multitude of fluid options, authorities, lifestyles and moral complexities and manage risk (see Giddens 1991), are more critical to

subalterns. Subaltern individuals must monitor the discursive contestation, become self-consciously gendered, sexed and/or racialised/ethnicised, and use their attachment and awareness to dialogically juxtapose (see Bakhtin 1981) the various discourses, read them against the grain and 'talk back' (hooks 1989, 1990) to the structures which impose them. They may rely on the certainties provided by cultural heritage or use their marginality (hooks 1990) to nourish their identification against the Other in social relationships (see Jenkins 1996; Burkitt 1991). Thus with more or less emotion, rationality and expertise, they manipulate social demands and perform subject positions normatively, transgressively and/or subversively. They do so in dialectical relationships with themselves, others and the structures which are ultimately artefacts of this very interactional activity.

Erving Goffman explores the dilemmas that confront members of groups regarded as different, including those 'to whom little consideration need be given' (1969a: 155) like children, the servant-like, foreigners or those with a 'spoiled' collective identity, amongst whom he counts 'vagrants, the blind, deaf or crippled, Jews, Negroes', all of whom are therefore stigmatised (Goffman 1968a: 22-5). Others in a delicate position are those whose difference is ambiguously-embodied, such as 'the adolescent, the light-skinned Negro [and] the second generation immigrant' (Barker, cited in Goffman 1968a: 25). The imagined selfhood of such individuals is either discredited or potentially discreditable and must be carefully and constantly managed in social interaction to be accomplished socially.

Such people are multiply situated by governing discourses that propose competing idealised identity positions and pressures to be loyal to them, and they adopt and adapt elements of them to form a personal sense of self (Goffman 1968a: 129) over time. In interaction, judgements are made of them and identity characteristics ascribed to them by others on the basis of stereotypes and normative expectations of the groups, categories and roles with which they are associated. Each individual's desired self is inevitably different from those judgements, and in order to socially realise that self, each performs it in an undertaking which is risky because of the distance between the 'real' and virtual or performed selves.

Goffman examines the ways in which individuals mobilise their symbolic resources in order to manage the impressions others form of them and thence to

achieve their desired self. Though this is the universal condition, for the stigmatised or ambiguous it has an ambivalent, confused and edgy character and a heightened urgency associated with competing social pressures (see Goffman 1968a). Individuals actively manipulate the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in the stereotypes, expectations and judgements with which they are confronted. They slip between them, dissemble, maintain multiple and differing performed characters (which also differ from the inner self) and enact them over time and across audiences (see Goffman 1969a). According to context they may 'pass', concealing their real self by presenting as stereotypically normal or in accord with the stigma (Goffman 1968a: 94-5). They avoid dissonant selves appearing inappropriately, contingently softening tensions between them, forming temporary alignments and portraying loyalty or enmity to antagonistic groups.

Individuals must have control of these demands in order to accomplish or, that is, have their desired self socially accepted. The strategies, generally routinised and natural (Goffman 1969a; 1968a: 152-55), are more reflexively employed by the discreditable because of the chronic uncertainty of their relations with wider society (Goffman 1968a: 108-12). In order to successfully negotiate the normative interactional order, discreditable individuals must be careful to conform (1969a: 94, 220; 1968a: 154) by adopting behaviours which 'tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society' (1969a: 31), even as they conform with others' expectations of their stigma to make social life amenable. Successful interaction in their several groups depends on the possession of knowledge and skills as an insider in them all. Such familiarity permits them for example, to successfully dissemble in the case of cross-loyalties (1969a: 113, 130-31) and invoke the tendency of normals to cooperate in performance by making it as easy as possible for them to tactfully avoid failures of performance and disattend stigma (see 1969a: 201-09; 1968a: 115-28). They may do this by subtly disidentifying with elements of their stigma which they know to be negatively valued, or overplaying those that are more positively valued.

Goffman's notion of the self is consistent with Mead's (1974) dual 'I' and 'me', the latter being the social actor made up of internalised others and the former the individual personality or psyche. Goffman's (1969a: 223-24) self is the architect of, but also the entity emerging from the negotiation of sociality, as much

a product of the individual personality as the social worlds with whom he/she interacts. The self is an effect of discourse and power and an outcome of social interaction and the individual's idiosyncratic negotiation of those constraints. The 'real' self is a mix of the perceptions of the individual held by others, the individual's perception of his/her own self and skill in negotiating to have it accepted. It exists as an aggregate of the repertoire of characters one plays, and the self felt in the time and space between performances, in the cracks between belonging to a social unit and being absorbed in it: 'the little ways in which we resist the pull' of, and differentiate ourselves from, the social units to which we belong (Goffman 1968b: 280). For Goffman the full real self emerges over time and across interactions as an amalgam of all these partial aspects. And the 'I', a psychobiological core entity, is at the centre of the ensemble of selves, making decisions about which symbolic resources to mobilise and which self to portray (see Goffman 1969a: 222-25). Judith Butler's understanding of the self is slightly different; for her, there is "no doer behind the deed"; people only come to see themselves as possessing inner lives and psychological identities through a set of repeated ... performances ... which congeal over time to create the illusion of self on the inside' (Elliott 2001: 117; see also Butler 1999: 43-4).

Apart from this difference, both Goffman and Butler see the self as emerging from dialectical relations between discourse, sociality and the individual. Butler follows Foucault in arguing that culture constructs and naturalises gendered subjects and their linkage to sexed bodies, and inscribes heterosexuality as normal. The paternal signifying economy constructs coherent and dichotomous selves which, though profoundly limited and limiting regulatory fictions (Butler 1999: 44), provide models of 'true' or 'authentic' identities to which individuals must respond. But it is the performance of those inherited subject positions and oppositions, the doing of sex and gender, which is fundamental to the constitution and authentication of 'the identity it is purported to be' (Butler 1999: 33). Individuals desire and imagine themselves as the ideals, and fashion individuated versions for themselves through 'masquerade'.

Masquerade (Butler 1999: 55-74; see also 1991) refers to the mutually-dependant 'comedic' relationship between male and female within the terms of the signifying economy. In that relationship individuals don a sometimes

exaggerated mask of normative gender and/or sexuality in order to achieve the appearance of “being” male or female and heterosexual, or to conceal, disguise or repress the lack or some departure from those types. Masculine masquerade involves posturing as the coherent autonomous male subject and concealing the repressed desires which threaten to undermine the illusion. The foundational illusions of these self-elaborations depend on the complicity of the female Other against whom masculinity is in fact constituted. Feminine masquerade lies in the reciprocal female performance of ‘being’, ‘(in the sense of “posture as if they were”’) precisely what men are not’ (see Butler 1999: 58), of being the Phallus’s ‘Other, its absence, its lack, the dialectical confirmation of its identity’ (see Butler 1999: 56). This may gain public acceptance but imply the repression of elements of feminine identity and desire (though what is repressed is problematised by Butler; see 1999: 61-2). Masquerade is the ‘performative production of a sexual ontology, an appearing that makes itself convincing as a “being”’ (Butler 1999: 60).

Individuals are immersed in this play of appearances—impossibilities, allusions, incoherences and deceptions—and compelled to interpret and enact what, as conceptual ideals, can only ever be ‘assumed in ... token form’ (Butler 1999: 59) and to which they are always inadequate in real life. It achieves the appearance of being the coherent gendered/sexed self, and is integral to the production and reproduction of the normative cultural order. Performance of either identity may though, modify the model and category and transform the order. Transgressive performance occupies the no-man’s land between authorised subject positions or is beyond the definitional boundaries and so departs from the naturalised unities. Drag, butch lesbian or macho gay identities (involving conspicuous masquerade) can create ‘internally dissonant ... resignification[s] of hegemonic categories’ and identities (Butler 1999: 157) and expose the normative or ‘true’ identities that they parody as arbitrary and phantasmatic. Such artful performances of gender and sex, and potentially of race/ethnicity, can disturb, denaturalise, disrupt and gradually transform the established social order.

Complexity: hybridity, fluidity and ambiguity

In the dialectic above, individual creativity further complicates the already internecine processes of subaltern subjection. Individual action in accord with normative and/or liberatory discourses may provide ontological security (see Seidman 1997: 159) but replicate stereotypes and exaggerate the disjuncture between discursive and lived reality. Transgressive action may add an incoherence which further confuses the distinctions between lived and imagined identities and may or may not achieve nuanced selves. Recent feminist, queer and postcolonial thinking has sought to understand the complexity of identity intersection, contingency, partiality, indeterminacy, movement and ambivalence that has never been contained by, and in fact emerges from, modernist attempts to master these conditions. This final section of this conceptual framework critically considers the main currents of those attempts.

Feminist analyses of the 1990s, after the “paradigm shift” of the cultural turn (Barrett and Phillips 1992: 2) and pushed by black feminist critique (hooks 1982; Collins 1990; Haraway 1990), has taken a deconstructive stance towards the category ‘women’. Those analyses explore the intersection of gender with other major subject positions such as class, sexuality and ethnicity, as well as marital status, occupation, age and others beyond the major analytic categories (see Yuval-Davis 1993). The analyses have revealed the differential impact of feminist political action for middle-class and black women, and the ways in which some use the privilege of profession or class to ‘negotiate their way through gendered and racialised barriers’ (Bradley 1996: 109). The recognition that the experience of gender is influenced by multiple coexistent categoric identities has exposed the supposed sisterhood of women as a myth and collapsed the notion of a common political interest (Bradley 1996: 101-02). 1990s feminism also recognises that gender is not at the forefront of every woman’s self-consciousness but may be outweighed by class or ethnicity. Thus an individual may identify as a woman without denying the other categories with which she identifies, and her identity can be seen as a matter of fluid interplay, or ‘shifting processes of identification’ (Bradley 1997: 106) between intersecting social dynamics and positions.

Queer theory has deconstructed the politics that produce homosexuality. Eve Sedgwick (1990) and Diana Fuss (1989, 1991) challenge the oppositionality and

separateness of the categories of knowledge that are the prime technology of that production, arguing that the distinctions between ‘us’ and ‘them’, sameness and difference and inside and outside (see Sedgwick 1990: 72) are at the heart of the normative order, but that the terms in each pair are mutually interdependent and the relationships between them imprecise, dynamic and unstable. ‘Heterosexuality’ is in ‘close psychical proximity [to] its terrifying (homo)sexual other’ (Fuss 1991: 3). And, as Seidman (1997: 153) states in his summation of Fuss’s work, in the hetero/homo separation each term ‘presuppose[s the] other, each is elicited by the other, contained, as it were, in the other.’

Similarly, sameness and difference are not discrete. For Fuss (1989: 103), ‘identity always contains the spectre of non-identity within it, ... the subject is always divided and identity is always purchased at the price of the exclusion of the Other, the repression or repudiation of non-identity’. For Seidman (1997: 152):

persons or objects acquire identities only in contrast to what they are not. The affirmation of an identity entails the production and exclusion of that which is different or the creation of otherness. This otherness, though, is never truly exceeded or silenced; it is present in identity and haunts it as its limit or impossibility.

This destabilisation of the internal unity and neat oppositionality of knowledges and identities is intended to subvert the construction of heteronormativity and with it the marginalisation of homosexuality. For its part, feminist deconstructionism has recognised that ‘feminism can no longer ground itself in an essentialist conception of “woman” or an understanding of a “gender identity” or “interest” shared by all women’ (Pringle and Watson 1992: 68). Feminist theorists have engaged with the conundrum of reconciling women’s diversity with the political need of collective and subjective unity (see Phillips 1987) and attempted to retain the meaning of the category without reprising the reification of essentialist politics. Denise Riley (1988) has ‘deconstructed “women” out of existence, [yet] accepts that this is compatible with ‘a politics of “as if they existed”’ (Lister 1997: 77). Other attempts to find a politics of ambiguous difference include Iris Marion Young’s (1989, 1990) search for a politics of representative groups, Chantal Mouffe’s (see Lister 1997: 79) proposal of a radical pluralism which distinguishes between diversity and imposed division or inequality, and Anna

Yeatman's (1993) coalitions built on solidarity and transversal dialogue across women's differences and partialities, including with dominant identities (see Yuval-Davis 1993, 1994).

Such theoretical struggle is invaluable to the development of more subtle understandings of native subjection, subjectivity and politics, but there is in it a reluctance to pursue the implications of its own deconstruction. There remains a preference for unity based in oppression and a fear of destabilising the man/woman opposition so far as it is 'a move that pulls the rug from under feminist struggle' (Barrett and Phillips 1992: 8). The diversity of women's experience has 'heightened the need to consider the interaction of gender with other dimensions of inequality' (Bradley 1996: 98), while the theorisation of intersections with whiteness, middle-classness or heterosexuality is neglected, though they may be important sources of women's self-affirmation and act to confound oppression. The retreat to a framework of categoric boundedness and monolithic power glosses women's more complex lived reality, relational power and 'imagined' community (see Lister 1997: 79-80), and ignores the humanness they share with men (Lorde 1990: 283). Though the ideal may be to marry the former with a sensitivity to the latter in local contexts (see Bradley 1996: 103), the search is for coalitions against normativity (Lister 1997: 200) which make difficult but should not 'refuse [a] representational politics' (Butler 1999: 8-9, 20-2; see also Carver and Chambers 2008; Chambers and Carver 2008).

Theorists of difference are also troubled by the dilemma of a theoretically evaporating subject and the political need for that subject to be solidary. Queer theorising has not articulated a model of queer selfhood, but has tended to retain an implicit notion of sexual difference (Seidman 1997: 158) and has neglected theoretical analysis of important cases of ambiguity like those of bisexuality or the gay-identified, heterosexually married man. Poststructuralist analysis has tended to regard the native subject and political cause as exceptional. Foucault for instance (1991c: 2-3), wrote that the struggle of a 'colonial people ... to free itself of its coloniser ... is truly an act of liberation',² and Mouffe (in Lister 1997: 80)

² Foucault did add a rider to the effect that 'this act of liberation is not sufficient to establish the practices of liberty that later on will be necessary for this people, this society and these individuals to decide upon receivable and acceptable forms of their existence or political society' 1991c: 3). This seems to suggest an awareness of the problematic of resistance identity politics.

thinks that it may be appropriate to consider Native Americans, unlike others, to have a 'clear, comprehensive identity and way of life'.

Much postcolonial thought though, has come to understand the relationship between coloniser and colonised as more agonistic and transactional than antagonistic and uni-directional. The relationship is seen as one of 'reciprocal antagonism and desire ... colonial oppression and the compelling seductions of colonial power, contestation and its discomfiting other, complicity' (Gandhi 1998: 4-5). For Memmi (1963) it was of mutual symbiosis, love and hate, and for Said (1993: xxvii) one of interdependence and overlap, in which 'Western imperialism and Third World nationalism feed off each other.'

For Homi Bhabha (1994: 1-9), the intermixing initiated by the colonial relationship and proliferated through global migration, diaspora, displacement and new social movements means that the notion of any culture's containedness or of 'an uncontaminated culture in a single country' (1996: 53) is an absurdity. That mixing has produced pluralistic national societies composed of multiple 'incommensurable elements—the stubborn chunks—as the basis of cultural identifications' (1994: 219). These societies are in a constant state of flux at the points of intersection, the border zones, interstices or 'third' spaces at which people enunciate hybrid group and individual identities (1994: 5).

Bhabha (1994: 102-11) argues that colonial authority was secured by the subtle manipulation of difference, in the double imperial inscription of essentialist images of Englishness and its Others and their metonymic imitation in the colonies, and strategies of differentiation, individuation, displacement and incited disavowal. The coloniser-colonised contact occurred not at zones of antagonism or repression but at shimmering horizons of agonism, spaces of partial incorporation and partial disavowal of the master's fantasy and fear (Bhabha 1994: 206). From the process of imaging, mimesis and agonistic interaction emerged a 'hybrid, half-made colonial world' (Bhabha 1994: 107) and subjects which were 'neither the One nor the Other, but *something else besides, in-between*' (Bhabha 1994: 219, original emphasis). That is, the process enunciated cultural and subjective partiality, hybridity, undecidability and indeterminacy in which neither coloniser nor colonised has plenitudinous presence. Both are

ambivalent, split between the appearance of originality and identity, and articulation as copy and difference from the archaic.

For Bhabha (1994: 112-20), embrace of this hybridity can subvert the processes of colonial domination by making the colonised enigmatic and allowing them to rearticulate and reverse the direction and evade the positioning of the colonialist gaze. Strategies of insurgent hybridity such as mimicry (1994: 88) can become the grounds of an 'irremediably estranging' (1994: 114) intervention. They produce a parodic or partial vision of the coloniser's presence, expose the strategies of colonialist power, de-authorise references to native culture, revalue colonial symbols and hence undermine the governing manipulation of the cultural.

His theorisation has allowed the native to be seen as a more complex, 'dispersed and variously positioned' subject (Parry 1987: 40) than earlier theory and politics made possible. Yet Bhabha confronts a dilemma similar to that faced by feminist and queer theorists. Perhaps due to the grounding of his theorising in literary text rather than the everyday social and in colonial contexts such as India, and to his personal preference for engagement with 'the "foreign" element which reveals the interstitial' over 'the metonymic fragmentation of the "original"' (1994: 227), much of his analysis retains a faith in the singularity and unity of the colonised native, to which he is reluctant to extend an equally rigorous critique.

Thus, he states that the 'aim of [his theory of] cultural difference is to rearticulate the sum of knowledge from the perspective of the signifying position of the minority that resists totalisation' (1994: 162). Though partial and in-between, his colonised/native hybridity retains some implied discrete difference. Identity is ambivalent only at zones of contact rather than being diffuse through whole-of-culture interpenetration. Native political instrumentality, performativity and internal disciplinary mechanisms, and the 'partial incorporation' of the postcolonial bourgeois for instance, are inadequately theorised. Finally, he appears too ready to assume that the colonised desire and/or are capable of embracing hybridity, and to grant mimicry and rumour (1994: 200-02) a devastating effect on colonial authority (see 1994: 112-20). With these shortcomings, his theorisation is nevertheless a valuable resource in understanding contemporary native subjectivity and politics.

Derrida's deconstruction of knowledge and identity

Frantz Fanon (1967, 1986), WEB du Bois (1965, 1970) and Stuart Hall (1990, 1991a, 1991b) recognise the dilemmas, and their work complements that of Bhabha. They engage with the social and confront comprehensive collective and subjective imbrication and identity ambivalence. As it is in much of the foregoing, Derrida's philosophy is an important influence and the following outlines his contribution to the conceptual framework, and the way in which Hall in particular applies it to contemporary colonised people in the West.

Against the modernist search for univocal truth, certainty and clarity which has led to the constriction of gender and sexuality and the paradoxical production of uncertainty, Derrida poses a philosophy of ambiguity, flux and becoming-ness that moves the understanding of identity toward a model of differentiated sameness and inclusive difference, constatively constituted through difference. His deconstruction of Western philosophy reveals the founding assumption of the universality of its own mythology and produces more complex and powerful understandings of language, meaning, culture, identity, difference and the self.

For Derrida (see Sedgwick 2001: 197), meaning does not rest on the firm foundation implied in the heliocentric and logocentric tradition of the West; meaning and truth cannot be exactly represented or given as a unity, fixed at a point in time or context through the equivalence in literal language between word and thing, nor are they dependent on speech. They are not fixed in the formal structured relationships of difference in language but are fluid and nebulous, the product in all symbolic communication of play or movement between words, signs, symbols, texts and social and cultural practices. Meaning is constantly being produced in the incessant 'play', slippage and movement between signification and sign-substitution.

Derrida explains the relationship between meaning and conceptual movement with the key terms of *différance*, the trace, iterability and supplementarity. For him, ambiguity and undecidability are essential features of meaning and its production. He (1978: xvi, translator's introduction) uses the word *différance*, which 'combines in neither the active nor the passive voice the coincidence of meanings in the [French] verb '*différer*': to differ (in space) and to defer (to put off in time, to postpone presence). ... It plays on both meanings at once'.

Différance carries the commonplace meaning of difference, as of a distance, spacing, discernible non-identity or ‘dissimilar otherness, ... with a certain perseverance in repetition’ (Derrida 1982: 8). It incorporates that meaning and a temporal dimension, ‘a taking account of time, ... a detour, a delay, a relay’ (Derrida 1982: 8) of meaning. It carries the sense of holding off on meaning, or suspending any final resolution of meaning, and so accounts for the dependence of meaning on context, and the differences of meaning according to context. *Différance* incorporates both meanings simultaneously and is, Derrida (1982: 8) says, ‘immediately and irreducibly polysemic. [It] must defer to the discourse in which it occurs, its interpretive context.’ Thus meaning is produced through a simultaneous differing in space and deferring in time, according to context. Meaning is found/produced in the movement between alternative meanings and contexts.

The absolute conditions of possibility for meaning then, are not so much the fixed structures of language as the play of meaning beyond direct oppositions. And those conditions are less the metaphysics of presence than, through *différance*, a chain of signifiers or non-presence. *Différance* is about non-presence inasmuch as signification is used in the absence of, and as substitution for, the thing itself, and so suspends the moment when the thing can be sensed, touched, smelt or used. Meaning is gained via the detour of signification. Signification is then, ‘deferred presence ... it represents the present in its absence. It takes the place of the present’ (Derrida 1982: 9).

What is present at any moment is the trace of relationships with other past and future meanings. These traces, the marks of the deferral of presence which the sign signifies, are ‘*the absolute origin of sense in general ... [and] the différence which opens appearance ... and signification*’ (Derrida 1976: 65, original emphasis). There is no presence before or outside *différance* as the origin of meaning, because language is based only in the chain of arbitrary and different signs (see Derrida 1982: 11-12). But there is always an excess of meaning beyond differences and traces.

The play or movement of *différance* and trace constitutes the ‘force’ or energy that creates meaning, and cannot be fixed in the structure of language, even in writing (Derrida 1978: 3-30). The force, and with it meaning, is realised in

metaphorical sign substitution, the ambiguities of which are critical in the metaphysics of the West, despite the stress on clarity, representational truth and the speaker. Furthermore, there is no single proper interpretation which can claim originary truth. Spivak explains this notion in her preface to *Of Grammatology* (Derrida 1976) via the analogy of the book. She says that a book does not have a single authoritative meaning of greater value (which would therefore establish a hierarchy of values) because it is original, but has, rather, many readings or meanings of different value, each of which has meaning through its relations with traces of previous meanings. Each reading is different and there is always another meaning to be had, according to reader and context.

Thus, just as metaphor is not supplementary to the oppositional structure of language in the production of meaning, so writing is not derivative and therefore a derogation of originary spoken language. This means that each generation of language, each conceptual representation, need not imply a decay or loss of originary meaning and truth. Derrida's analysis of Western metaphysics denies the ethnocentricity of logocentrism, in which the origin of truth is always assigned to discourse in the living presence of "'full" speech' (Sedgwick 2001: 205). This undoes the view that Western culture has, through its supposedly representational language which equates image to truth, priority over other cultures and languages which it marginalises as figurative (Sedgwick 2001: 204). Derrida's analysis challenges the capacity of transparency and singularity (univocality) to explain meaning, and the reliance of logocentric thinking on an economy of oppositional meanings. Logocentric thinking has, according to Derrida (1976: 8):

produced the idea of the world, the idea of world-origin, that arises from the difference between the worldly and the non-worldly, the outside and the inside, ideality and non-ideality, universal and nonuniversal, transcendental and empirical etc.

In 'Parergon', Derrida (1987) problematises the distinction between the centre and the margin. He critiques Kant's metaphor of a picture and its frame, in which the frame is considered a supplementary adornment to the artwork, to question the distinction between the two and propose that without the frame the aesthetic unity or integrity of the whole would be lost. As he argues in respect of binary difference and metaphor, speech and writing, the particular and universal, the

inside and outside, and aesthetic and logical capacities, the apparently inferior term is not supplementary but essential to the superior; each is implicated in the other and meaning depends upon both, with neither capable alone of producing full integrity of meaning:

Instead of simply framing the pre-established unity of the work of art, the *parergon* becomes a necessary part of it, disturbing the field of the work's autonomy to the extent that the assumed dominance of the one over the other is rendered questionable (in Sedgwick 2001: 210).

Derrida's reading of Western metaphysics is relevant to the research conducted for this thesis in its problematisation of the ideal of an originary (authentic and authoritative), historically fixed culture or tradition (1974: 12) against which every change thereafter is judged to be a loss or degradation. What is considered traditional in a culture at any moment, as one of any number of sets of sign-substitutions, is no more the essence of the culture than others from different contexts, including the earliest. His reading (see Derrida 1974) de-legitimises the taken for granted priority of Western rationality over other ways of thinking and reveals the ethnocentricity of its claims to universality. Furthermore, the West's Others can be seen to be not entirely exterior to, but mutually imbricated in, the West; indeed those Others are the condition of possibility for the existence of the West and *vice versa*.

Implying as it does insubstantiality and instability of cultural forms, social practices and the self, his thought destabilises the Western order more than oppositional politics or transgressive performance of self based in the dominant way of seeing identity. *Différance* and others of his concepts capture much of the actual complexity of identification obscured in that politics. They capture the sense of doubled, partial, qualified and contingent othering in identity formation, for example in the simultaneous othering of outsiders and insiders within any group, with whom one nevertheless identifies. His thoughts suggest the way in which individuals identify with multiple subject positions and groups, and not absolutely or unconditionally with any one of them. That is, it suggests the simultaneous experience of identity and difference in place of the illusory notion of separateness. And it captures the intangible nature of identity, which (especially in the case of people 'on the cusp of race', as Ashkenasi Jews (Haynes 2003))

floats between sensibility and non-sensibility; it is there and not there. Derrida captures this indefinability of identity in which one simultaneously differs and does not differ. Identity, or identification, is a matter of slippage, of movement; it differs according to context and each state of identity is temporary. Identity is not the opposite of difference: sameness and otherness cannot be thought of as neatly discrete, the one exclusive of the other. Rather, sameness has traces of other meanings within. Thus Derrida's work collapses taken for granted notions of bounded categoric identities, identity fixedness and binarisms of insider/outsider, universal/particular or us/them, and opens up a more accommodating notion of identity.

Postcolonial articulations of identity ambivalence

Du Bois and Fanon lived and theorised similar identities. Neither identified as 'in-between', but affiliated in complicated ways with their black African heritage, national citizenship(s) and universal humanness. They existed within *and* exceeded the polarities of categoric sameness and difference, to be neither the same as nor ineradicably different from white others, and maintained an expansive or inclusive doubleness. They also sought to develop a cosmopolitan universalism, to 'liberate the man of colour from himself' and help them 'to take on the universality inherent in the human condition' (Fanon 1986: 10, 12).

Both men remained within the particular but also distanced themselves from fantasies of prior essence. They transcended provincialism and race and moved above the culturally-constructed 'Veil of Race' into what du Bois (1965: 509) called the 'kingdom of culture', in which individuals may be seen as 'uncoloured' (1965: 437). For Fanon too (see Memmi 1973), the way to achieve human identity as a new and unraced man was to escape the entrapments of national identification and black or white racial authenticity, and to abandon what Said (1989: 225) called 'fixed ideas of settled identity and culturally authorised definition'. Their universalism was a doubling: it incorporated differentiated and individually mediated identification with particular racial groups but also a shared humanity beyond the particular and local, that is the unraced universal. It was the product of a 'dialectic that preserve[d] the interplay of the universal and the particular rather than liquidating [it]' (Posnock 1997: 329). It emerged in that interplay, in the

movement between diverse and apparently contradictory identity positions, and in the evolution from origins. Thus their identities lay less in fixed identity positions and more in identificatory action, invention and reinvention, and the capacity to sustain an indeterminacy of positioning, and so to be less assimilable within the schema of races.

Stuart Hall brings together many similar themes in his attempts to understand the Black British through a 'second ... view of cultural identity' (1990: 225). For him as for others, the first view, characterised by stereotypical marginality, nativist essentialism and binarism, has a time and place and some continuing relevance. However, for the Black British at the moment, he (1988: 28) urges the abandonment of 'the innocent notion of the essential black subject' and the embrace of the world of contradiction: 'in order to conduct [a] politics really we have to live outside of the dream, to wake up, to grow up, to come into the world of contradiction' (1991b: 59).

These statements suggest that Hall refuses the first way of identity—as he (1987: 45) said, "black" has never been just there'—nor is it all good nor all the same, and that view of identity and the politics based on it is no longer tenable (see 1991b: 48). He recognises that 'black' is a constructed category and a narrative. The world of contradiction to which he refers opens up with that refusal, the recognition of the lived postmodern reality (see 1991a, 1992) of the Black British and the fact of their identification across difference, their diverse, partial and mobile subject positionings and subjective ambivalence. A fundamental tenet of this view is that identity is not self-sufficient but always constructed across, with and through difference, and in relationship with, not through the exclusion of, the other. Speaking of black popular culture in music, Hall (1992: 28) says that:

there are no pure forms at all. Always they are the product of partial synchronisation, of engagement across cultural boundaries, of the confluence of more than one tradition, of the negotiations of dominant and subordinate positions, of the subterranean strategies of recoding and transcoding, of critical signification, of signifying. Always these forms are impure, to some degree hybridised.

And at the individual level, '[c]onstituting oneself as "black" is [a] recognition of self through difference: certain clear polarities and extremities against which one tries to define oneself' (Hall 1987: 45). That is, collective and individual ethnic, class, gender or sexual identity is constituted as much through interactions with sameness as difference, both without and within the group. One may be different on any criteria and similar on others. This acknowledges that in identity and selfhood there is a doubleness of similarity and difference, and that difference or its traces is always in play. It acknowledges 'the Other that belongs inside one' (Hall 1991b: 48).

Individuals and groups are positioned by the histories, cultures and discourses in which they participate, the categories into which they are placed and the narratives they construct. Those positioning discourses, cultures and categories are in relationships not so much of fixed opposition as of contiguity and 'cross-dislocation'. They are in more or less stable, and more or less mutually supportive or antagonistic relationships (as for instance between certain ethnicities, masculinities and class). They intersect, 'tend to locate us differently at different moments' (Hall 1991b: 59) and 'refuse to coalesce around a single axis of differentiation' (Hall 1992: 31). Because each position comprises only a part of the complex self, and at best a rough approximation of the meaning of that part, that self is tied to none, nor to unalterable oppositions between any (see Hall 1987: 46). Instead, individuals and groups cross the conceptual boundaries, realign identifications, make compromises, accept ambiguities and accommodate outright dissonances. Identity is then, in perpetual motion, shifting between and recombining positions to avoid oppositions and to identify as, for example, of Caribbean descent, black *and* British, or normally *and* differently British. Hall shows identity to be partial, contingent, incomplete, 'a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being"' (1990: 225), and ambivalent.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined some of the complexity of the contemporary subaltern subject and the dynamics of its constitution. The thesis adopts this theoretical stance in respect of Aboriginal Tasmanians, and therefore begins with the notion that the particular subjectivity of those who identify as Aborigines, their

Aboriginality, is not a transcendent quality but a product of their immersion in and negotiation of a confluence of powerful positioning discourses and institutional practices. That particular subjectivity overlays a number of other aspects of self and is, moreover, forever incomplete and in process.

The project begins with the expectation that the structures and discourses which shape the Aboriginal Tasmanian include, at the least, those of global capitalism, national governance and media representations, interactions with the wider public and the institutions of the nation-state, and the collective politics of national, state and local Aboriginal communities. The diversity of such positioning forces suggests that the Aboriginal self is comprised of multiple imagined identities and subject positions, some of which will apparently conflict, and that individual Aborigines will as an outcome feel some subjective indeterminacy, ambivalence and tension. They can be expected to feel a degree of pressure to develop a coherent and stable sense of self and to clearly express and be 'true to' that self. They will also feel some pressure to be individually able to realise that self as a matter of self-esteem, and to mobilise whatever resources are available in doing so. Such resources will include again at the least, essentialist self-representation.

Chapter 3 Coming to Know the Masquerade

Introduction

This research project responds to claims made by Aboriginal organisations and spokespersons that ‘the’ Aboriginal community and individuals are at the mercy of state pressure to assimilate and suffer threats to the integrity and continuity of cherished cultural values and distinct identity, and that that pressure leads to many of the troubles that Aborigines experience. The research aims to understand the problematic lived experience of contemporary Aboriginality and the extent to which it is a product of the relationship with the state. The relevant research literature indicates the centrality of progressive public policy discourse and Aboriginal counter-discourse, and individuals’ negotiation of those discourses in their self-definition and accomplishment of a particular everyday social order. The literature reveals Aboriginal agency at the macro political and micro, individual, level and the possibility of a discursive reality of cultural particularity overlaying a lived reality of interculturality and *différance*. The theoretical framework indicates that that complexity may be understood in terms of a dialectic between progressivist public policy and Aboriginal political discourses-in-practice¹ and the everyday interactional accomplishment of reality.

In seeking to understand these dynamics, the objectives of the research are to identify the critical discourses of the administrative state and Aboriginal political agitation, to understand the relationship between them and the way in which individual Aborigines relate to, and are affected by, those discourses in schools and in wider Tasmanian and national settings. Within those objectives, the research seeks to determine the interpretations and meanings individuals make of those discourses, the pressures the discourses impose on them, and the ways in which individuals negotiate the pressures. Finally, it seeks to understand the

¹ I take a Foucauldian understanding of discourse as ‘not merely bodies of ideas, ideologies, or other symbolic formulations, but ... also working attitudes, modes of address, terms of reference, and courses of action suffused into social practices’ (Gubrium and Hostein 2000: 493-94, and see Foucault 1972, 1977a). In this chapter I refer, according to context, to a singular discourse or ‘discourse-in-practice’, and to two analytically separate discourses, that is, those of progressivist public policy and Aboriginal identity politics. Though apparently contestatory, the two share a great deal, with relatively minor differences, and intersect and interact to comprise the singular.

social, cultural and subjective outcomes of this interplay between discursive conditioning and individual negotiation.

These aims and objectives shape the research as an examination of the connection between private troubles and public issues, policies and institutions, the connection to which C. Wright Mills (1959) urged researchers in the human sciences to attend. The attempt is to capture and make understandable the particular contemporary Aboriginal social order, including the ways in which it is accomplished in the everyday, the conditions under which, and the resources from which, it is accomplished, and the consequences it has for individuals. This implies an attempt to understand what it is that social structures tell Aborigines they should do and be, what Aborigines themselves say they do and are, what they do in fact, and the connections between all three.

These aims and objectives determine that the research become an ‘interpretive analytics’ (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982; Dean 1999: 20-39) of the conditions under which certain institutionalised ‘regimes of practices’, which are ‘fairly coherent sets of ways of going about doing things ... come into being, are maintained and are transformed’ (Dean 1999: 21). Those conditions, prime amongst which are particular forms of knowledge and expertise, are one element of the equation. The research must also become an analytics of Aborigines’ “‘interpretive practice”—the constellation of procedures, conditions, and resources’ (Gubrium and Holstein 2000: 488) through which they apprehend, convey and accomplish their reality in everyday life. Because regimes of practices cross institutional boundaries and intersect in a number of ways (Dean 1999: 21), the research must include in its purview the specific institutional site of education, as well as other institutions, the context of Aboriginal affairs more generally and the overarching and encompassing ‘milieu of thought’ (Dean 1999: 22).

Such an analytics requires the adoption of an approach which marries, as in Norman Denzin’s (1989: 10-34 *and passim*) ‘interpretive interactionist’ perspective, the diverse conceptual foundations of symbolic interactionism, interpretive phenomenology and hermeneutics. As in the interpretive interactionist perspective, this project is emic (Denzin 1989: 20-1) and naturalistic (Denzin 1989: 21-2; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 6) in its focus and centrally concerned with both the interactional text—with “‘men and women and their

moments of interaction” rather than merely “moments and their men” (Denzin 1989: 20)—and the location of that text within national social structures and institutional and historical discourses.

This analytics requires some modification of Denzin’s approach in order that it capture the ‘historically and culturally located systems of power/knowledge’ which contribute to the constitution of the ‘*whats* of everyday life’ (Gubrium and Holstein 2000: 493 original emphasis). Thus the research moves the focus from a restricted number of participants’ epiphanous biographical events (see Denzin 1989: 15-18) to the accumulated mundane experience of a greater number of people. It also complements the grounded approach Denzin describes with an externally-derived conceptual schema, reduces the extent of subsequent thick description to allow for greater analytic interpretation (Denzin 1989: 114) and seeks to generate generalisations and propositions. These modifications lend the research greater ethnographic sensitivity to the etic dimension and participants’ multiple inter- and intra-cultural realities (see Fetterman 1989: 27-35).

The research uses ethnographic methods to generate data, firstly through participant observation of participants’ lived experience in Tasmanian school settings and secondly through protracted unobtrusive observation of Aboriginal political behaviour and social interaction in wider public contexts. Observation in both phases is complemented by semi-structured and unstructured interviews and documentary sources. This method avoids the problem of abstraction from lived reality that is evident in the research literature and has meant that the complexity revealed in that literature has not been well considered. In the approach, the data developed from the first stage is analysed separately to develop some working interpretations, which are then refined and extended in the second stage of research and analysis. The combination allows for the development of propositions beyond the cases of Tasmania and schooling.

Epistemological and methodological orientation

The approach indicated above is an ethnomethodologically-oriented ethnography of everyday interpretive practice (see Garfinkel 1984), which derives from Husserl’s (1962; 1970; see Gubrium and Holstein 2000: 488) philosophical, and Schutz’s (1962; 1964; 1970) sociological approach to the part played by human

consciousness and interaction in investing with meaning, and so constituting, objective reality. It builds on their phenomenological rejection of notions of social reality as social facts which speak for themselves, and is informed by the social constructionist (Berger and Luckman 1966) and symbolic interactionist (Blumer 1962; 1969) focus on the generation of meaning through individuals' interpretative interactional experience and use of language and other symbolic interaction. The approach could not in this case therefore, accept at face value the orthodox understandings of Aboriginal cultural difference, assimilation and marginalisation as given, as “‘out there”, so to speak’ as in Schutz’s “natural attitude”” (see Gubrium and Holstein 2000: 489-90). Instead, it adopts an ethnomethodological focus on the construction of Aboriginal reality through commonsensical knowledge, everyday interpretation and social interaction.

Gubrium and Holstein (2000: 488) argue that ethnomethodological enquiry is increasingly incorporating the antecedent conditions and larger structures which condition individuals' everyday construction of the object world. It focuses on individuals' subjective interpretation and intersubjective manipulation of the cultural patterns, institutional frameworks, collective representations, discourses, ‘publicly standardised ideas’ (Douglas 1986: 96) and other ‘schemes of interpretation’ (Schutz 1970) that surround them (see Benson and Hughes 1983: 100-03). It considers their categories, typifications and images as resources which individuals use to ‘interpret experience, grasp the intentions and motivations of others, achieve intersubjective understandings and coordinate actions’ (Holstein and Gubrium 1998: 139; see also 146, 148), and, indexed to the local context (see Geertz 1993), as thus constituting their social reality. Within its ethnomethodological orientation then, the approach is influenced by critical, poststructuralist and postcolonial theorisation of the conditioning effects of the macro structures of discourse-as-practice. It is sensitive to the structural parameters, collective and individual interpretive practice and their interplay in the everyday formation of Aboriginal reality. It seeks meaning which may to participants apparently precede, but is actually conditioned by structural forces and reflexively grounded in, their social interaction.

Analytic ethnography seeks to gain insiders' understandings of their own social reality (Malinowski 1967; Geertz 1993: 55-70). It often adopts an inductive,

grounded (Glaser and Strauss 1967) approach to ‘witnessing’ (Goffman 1989: 125-26, 130) or becoming deeply familiar with that reality and developing generic theoretical propositions which emerge from the data (Lofland 1995). It is increasingly oriented, as in this case, to specific research questions deduced from related empirical enquiries and theory (Lofland 1995: 46, 51-2, 58-9; see Fetterman 1989). In this case, since the contemporary Aboriginal worlds of meaning are intertwined with those of the settler majority and global exigencies, the enquiry had to be sensitive to multiple intertwined and interacting cultures, social relationships and meanings. It had also to be sensitive to Aboriginal creativity in the interpretation, inflection, manipulation and navigation of the available resources, and therefore the potential for unorthodox, counter-hegemonic or ‘heretical’ (see Bourdieu 1973) interpretation. In this case then, the attempt was to gain insiders’ understandings of intermeshing inter- and intra-cultural perspectives, as they occur in schooling and everyday life, and as they are collectively and individually interpreted by Aborigines and others with whom they interact.

Accounting for such complexities demands that research serially bracket, estrange and deconstruct (Denzin 1989: 55-6) the key dimensions of the relationship—the two dominant discourses-in-practice and individuals’ interpretive negotiation of them in their own discursive (including rhetorical, performative and interactional) practice. The methodological attempt in this case is to maintain an analytic separation between the discourses-in-practice and their negotiation by individuals in discursive practice, and to preserve the interplay between the two (see Gubrium and Holstein 2000). As it happened, from iterative thematic and semiotic analysis and ‘zig-zagging’ between analysis and further data collection and comparison (see Creswell 1998: 57) a number of heretical insights emerged, notably the recognition of the strategic use of governing technologies by Aboriginal elites in respect of their own constituency.

These circumstances demanded that the research make the most of the empirical and theoretical literature and the researcher’s own life experience, but also that, as always part of the hermeneutic circle (Denzin 1989: 31, 53), the researcher’s ‘fettering human assumptions or “pieties”’ (Lofland 1995: 42), emotional attachments and partisan biases be acknowledged, moderated and

accounted for as far as possible. Thus, it was possible to draw on lived familiarity with the grammar or system of signification, including symbols, rituals and routines (Eco 1984), of Aboriginal relations with the institutions of the state, particularly educational institutions, for guidance. This familiarity was helpful in negotiations with Aboriginal community organisations, individuals and schools, though some preconceptions which attended it meant an initial reluctance to make or accept heretical interpretations. In order to overcome that reticence and to ensure a genuinely informed reading (see Denzin 1989: 45) of the data, developing interpretations were proposed to more interested teachers, Aboriginal students and adults involved in the research, and university colleagues. They were also cross-checked against each other as they changed, and continually referenced against the work of relevant critical thinkers.

Negotiation of the ethics and politics of indigenous research

The methods adopted above ensured ‘a “sophisticated”’ research rigour (Denzin 1989: 22)² and integrity that was critical in order that any as yet unknown but potentially heretical conclusions be accepted by state administrators, Aborigines and their political leaders, as legitimate depictions of social reality, and that any implications be capable of informing institutional change. In the context of indigenous interpretive frameworks which have held social scientific research to be ethnocentric, exploitative and objectifying (Smith 1999), some indigenous researchers and spokespeople have asked that researchers be of ‘good heart’ (Smith 1999: 10) and conduct research that is in the interests of the relevant community.

Such strictures can impose ethical tensions on an interpretive ethnographic project such as this. As indicated above, the project responded to Aboriginal claims that government programs and service delivery are culturally inappropriate, and are as a result ineffective, act to diminish Aboriginal culture and identity, and contribute to socio-economic marginalisation. The project began by hypothesising the role of government in challenging Aboriginal communal and individual identity and seeking to articulate the problematic relationship with government

² Sophisticated rigour is especially critical in this area of research, since in order to have any impact on the established orthodoxy in indigenous affairs the research methods (and findings) must be as publicly available, comprehensive and understandable as possible.

and mainstream community, in the expectation that it would advocate for minority interests and propose more appropriate government policy, program and service delivery. Consistent with research ethics at the time (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2002; National Health and Medical Research Council 2003a, 2003b), participants were provided with full information and voluntary participation sought in those terms.

However, as with much exploratory qualitative research (Rice and Ezzy 1999: 39), and consistent with the principles of ethical research, the data told an expected story which had nevertheless to be followed, using the theoretical framework and empirical literature to reflect critically on methods, analysis and emergent findings, and the possibility of undue personal influence on them. That involved bracketing my progressive bias and deconstructing not only the dominant liberal but also Aboriginal discourse, and led unavoidably to conclusions which did not conform to express community interpretations and expectations and were not apparently in the community's best interests, as they are defined in the dominant political rhetoric. The data, which captured the meanings of all sectors of the Aboriginal population (that is, members of the political elite and others of a range of ages, localities, political stances and communal affiliations), led to something like a 'guilty knowledge' (Fetterman 1989: 135) of internal Aboriginal politicking, normalising regulation and inequity. The knowledge forced a re-evaluation of the initial presumption of a simple equation between restrictive governmental action and legitimate Aboriginal resistance in pursuit of a threatened cultural integrity, and consideration of the notion that the creative agency of the Aboriginal elite is a foundational part of the problematic Aboriginal condition of political claim.

This dawning realisation in the mid to latter stages of the fieldwork created an ethical dilemma and some tension, insofar as it was neither possible to hold onto former certainties, accept the dominant progressive or Aboriginal rhetoric at face value nor, therefore, maintain the same relationship of trust with some Aboriginal interlocutors, who retained that rhetoric as an article of faith. At the same time, the obligation was to pursue the research and include these discomforting data in the analysis; to do otherwise would have been to collude with vested interests and perpetuate a 'scientific and moral fraud' (Fetterman 1989: 125). The ethical

obligation was to the Aboriginal population as a whole and to a comprehensive examination of the dynamics which shape Aboriginal lives. Thus in interviews, social interaction and formal discussion it was necessary to represent the research project as honestly but circumspectly as possible, and to give greater prominence to some aspects, like the elite politics, and less to others. This was possible to an extent, but my growing critical understanding of the dominant discourses and political stance did eventually become evident, which meant that earlier social interaction and interviews had to end. Ultimately, though they may be uncomfortable for some, the conclusions to which the project have come are the product of rigorous research and repay the trust of the Aboriginal informants who told their stories. They also can contribute positively to the long-term interests of the Aboriginal and wider Australian communities of which they are part.

Data generation

Accommodating these demands, consistent with the approach dictated by the issue of concern and research aims, in the light of relevant research, and sensitised and oriented by the theoretical framework, the research focused on the meanings embedded in the discourses of the (Tasmanian and Commonwealth) administrative state and Aboriginal political elite as they appear in schooling, their historical and contemporary sources and the relationship between those discourses.

Stage one: in Tasmanian schools

Much critical and poststructuralist (for instance Ball 1990; Foucault 1971, 1972; Giroux 1983, 1991; Hunter 1988, 1994; Stoler 1995), postcolonial (for instance Said 1979; Fanon 1986; Bhabha 1994) and feminist theorising (see hooks 1994; Lather 1991, 1995) implicates education as a crucial site of governance in the colonial and contemporary worlds. Research for this project was therefore undertaken in Tasmanian schools, two senior secondary colleges and one high school. The first of the colleges was in central Hobart, the state capital and largest city in the state, in the south, and the other was in central Launceston, the largest city in the north of the state. The high school was in the rural Channel area of southern Tasmania. Field work was initiated by negotiating the support of

Aboriginal stakeholders including the Tasmanian Aboriginal Education Association (TAEA) and individual school Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness (ASSPA) committees, and government agencies responsible for the development of Aboriginal affairs policy generally (Office of Aboriginal Affairs, OAA) and the delivery of service in education (Department of Education, DoE). In that negotiation it was explained that the project was dedicated to exploring an issue which has been expressed for many years by Aboriginal people, that is their perception of the centrality of government policy and service delivery in the decline of their cultural particularity and identity. Subsequently, the in-principle support of each school was arranged via letter, telephone and personal introduction. On arrival the most suitable mode of operation was arranged with the Principal and staff.

In each school the fieldwork was conducted with the support of those members of staff who were responsible for Aboriginal student support. Though this was often a delegated responsibility, those staff members were passionate advocates for Aboriginal interests in education, and keen to help. Those in the two schools in the south of the state did not enjoy the support of the single state-wide incorporated organisation, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC), though local Aboriginal parents were appreciative of their efforts; the teacher in the northern school had long experience with Aboriginal students and families in the region and had negotiated a constructive relationship with the local branch of the TAC. With that one exception, these teachers—all women—had little experience of Aboriginal affairs and little knowledge of the local Aboriginal community. In each school there were a number of teachers who were comfortable with a researcher participating in their classes. As soon as possible in each locale the project was introduced to local Aboriginal community representatives, Aboriginal parent committees and students, and their agreement negotiated.

Participant observation

In each school, the intent was to ‘develop a many-sided and relatively long-term relationship with a human association in its natural setting for the purposes of developing a scientific understanding of that association’ (Lofland and Lofland 1984: 12). In order to witness Aboriginal student experience, it was necessary to

be immersed (Goffman 1989; Atkinson and Hammersley 1994; Emerson *et al.* 1995: 1-4; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 1) in daily school routine, form relationships with students and teachers, listen to what they said and how they related to each other, watch their interactions with each other and with teachers, and ask questions.

This involved attendance at classes which included one or more Aboriginal students, in a range of subject areas, taught by a range of teachers including the dedicated Aboriginal support teacher, and ideally following a number of students through several classes. It involved observation of routine institutional practices, individual behaviours and interactions, reading of student work, and requesting students and teachers for their responses to certain statements. While the teacher talked to the whole class, it involved watching and listening to teacher and students and making notes, which were completed after the lesson; the same applied when students responded to the teacher, asked questions or took their turn to address the class. When students were doing their own work, usually book research or small group discussions, it was possible to wander around the class and talk with them, or to withdraw from active participation and concentrate on certain individuals or aspects of an encounter and to make notes.

In more vibrant classroom interactions it was not possible to listen to teacher talk, take part, observe student behaviour and take notes. Nor was it possible to retain in memory the detail of fast-unfolding interactions, and on those occasions it was necessary to withdraw to adjoining spaces to record observations and suppositions regarding meanings. The timing was determined by the intensity and duration of interactions and consideration of the equation of quality versus quantity of observation. Sometimes natural breaks in interaction (as when someone went to the shop for chips) provided time to think. Where possible teachers and students involved were asked for their own interpretations of incidents soon after they occurred, and on several occasions such perceptions could be directly compared. Several situations corresponded to Denzin's (1989: 37, 44) meaningful or problematic events in being moments of apparently significant emotion for the students concerned. As well, at the conclusion of most lessons it was possible to reflect on the events of the lesson with the teacher, and sometimes with Aboriginal and other students. The end of the school day left time

to read notes, make them more complete, add interpretation and notes regarding things to check in future, which guided subsequent observations.

Outside the classroom, observation included attendance at meetings of Aboriginal students convened by the responsible teacher, including ASSPA meetings, noting who did and did not attend, their interests, problems, relationships with the teacher and responses to her educational support and advocacy for Aboriginal causes. It meant participating in student interaction in the library, school grounds and nearby street/park precincts, noting the different friendship groupings, the spaces they adopted and their relations with groups in neighbouring spaces. It meant attending several extra-curricula activities, including a school play, ASSPA functions and regional school social functions. School architecture, displays of student work (in which art is prominent), academic and other honour boards and different spaces (particularly that set aside for Aboriginal students) also provided data, as did patterns in students' use of, and behaviour in, those and other spaces which they frequented outside class times (early morning before school, morning tea time with and without the presence of the teacher, late in the afternoon).

This data was supplemented by observation and participation in staff room conversations and teacher's solicited opinions regarding relevant educational matters in general and in respect of particular students. Few teachers had good knowledge of Aboriginal students' circumstances and broader issues in Aboriginal education, but with those who did have that background, discussion was considerable, and they became both subjects (providing data regarding the sources of their own meaning) and key informants (providing data regarding possible Aboriginal interpretations and their sources). There was no opportunity to develop a similar relationship with an Aboriginal expert informant.

Semi-structured interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight students in each school, a total of twenty four, of whom eighteen were female and six male (see Appendix 2). Potential interviewees were identified in the latter stages of field work, based on a range of factors, including cordiality of relationship with them, depth of observation of their school interactions, their willingness to participate

and capacity to articulate their perceptions, and the desire for maximum variation. The sample was triangulated by the inclusion of some extreme cases, like marginal members of the community, those who refused to participate in Aboriginal programs and those who identified strongly with the core community and resisted schooling (see Rice and Ezzy 1999: 43-6). Most were happy to oblige and obtained the signed permission of their parents/guardians. Two pairs of students felt more comfortable doing the interview together. Two (one from the core Bass Strait Island community, the other a mainlander) indicated they would participate but never got around to it, though the latter did provide a written statement of his understanding of his Aboriginality and the impact of schooling on that.

Following the structure provided by Interview Schedule 1 (Appendix 3), the interviews sought individuals' biographical 'self-stories' (Denzin 1989: 38) with a focus on their Aboriginality and school life. These were 'active' interviews in that they were adapted to suit each individual, sought to locate the concepts being explored in their lived experience, stimulate their engagement with the interview and help them to develop their own meanings through the interview process (see Mishler 1986; Clough 1992; Rice and Ezzy 1999: 52-9; May 2001: 123-37). Through dissimilar routes similar concepts were explored. For instance some interviews began with reference to observed incidents involving the interviewees or their general disposition and behaviours in school and sought to elicit reflections regarding factors which might shape their behaviour. Where the initial focus might have been on child rearing practices with one student (relating to classroom observations), it was on mechanics or the student restaurant with others. And from emerging issues and approaches to them, over time the theme list used to structure the interviews was adapted: the use of images of Aboriginal people to prompt discussion of Aboriginal stereotypes was discontinued, for instance.

Documentary sources

A number of documents provided a third source of data regarding the relationship of schooling and Aboriginality. These included school newsletters and flyers, student reports and display material; ASSPA newsletters; Departmental plans (see

Tasmanian Department of Education and the Arts 1995); Aboriginal Studies curriculum statements (Tasmanian Department of Education and the Arts n.d.); national policy documents such as the *National Aboriginal Education Policy* (Commonwealth of Australia 1994) and *National Indigenous English Language and Numeracy Strategy* (Commonwealth of Australia 1999). These texts provided evidence of governing administration and Aboriginal discourses in education, and highlighted the historical and national dimension to the Tasmanian context.

Stage two: in wider social contexts

Observation of adult interactions in wider social contexts began near the end of the work in schools, by which time there was a considerable bank of data concerning key categories of meaning, behaviour and terminology in the education of Aborigines, governing discourses-in-practice, unremarked routine and occasional ‘problematic’ or ‘troubling’ (Denzin 1989: 44) events, and teacher and student negotiation of discourse. From analysis during data collection a perception of recurring structural, interpretive and interactional patterns had emerged, which ‘captured’ (Denzin 1989: 54-5) something of Aboriginal students’ worlds of meaning. Working interpretations suggested some congruities and differences between progressive and Aboriginal discourses, and patterns in the way in which it was internalised and mobilised in social interaction by people in different regions of the state. Thus for example, students’ multiple identifications were becoming evident, as was the dissonance between that multiplicity and the discourses in school practice which privilege an isolated Aboriginal identity. The empirical and theoretical literature assisted in understanding these early indications, which in turn helped to refine the observation and interpretation conducted in the second stage of the research.

The second stage involved observation of Aboriginal interactions in public events in Tasmania and, via television, radio and print media, public affairs nationally, over the period 2002-2008. During this period also a small number of semi-structured interviews were conducted with Aboriginal adults, and further relevant texts were collected. As Kellehear (1993: 5, 47-8) suggests, the observation was used to consolidate understanding of themes and issues identified

through earlier participant observation and interviews with school students and adults.

Unobtrusive observation

The period (2002-2008) saw a number of events which brought together many Aboriginal Tasmanians, including members of the cultural elite of the different regional communities and the political elite of the state-wide community, in often highly emotionally charged interactions with others from different parts of the Aboriginal and wider communities. Those interactions included several Aboriginal community meetings centred on the furore over the attempt by some to enrol and vote in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSIC) election³ and the attempt by others to disqualify them. These included a meeting sponsored by the Indigenous Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation at which those rejected by the Independent Indigenous Advisory Panel considered their future course of action, and the hearings conducted by the Commonwealth Administrative Appeals Tribunal. Others were Keith Windschuttle's launch of his (2002) book *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, several public meetings which debated his conclusions and the launch of the edited collection of responses to it (Manne 2003), the celebration of National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week⁴ 2003 at the university, the large public funeral of a prominent Aboriginal Tasmanian woman, a lecture by Lowitja O'Donohue sponsored by the national social justice group Anglicare, and various Aboriginal exhibition openings and book launches. All of these interactions were observed.

In some, like the intra-community meeting, it was appropriate to explain to leaders or spokespersons the purpose of the researcher's presence, which was readily accepted. In others, like the book launches, debates, funeral and public

³ ATSIC, formed in 1989 as a means of enhancing self-determination and comprised of elected representatives of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, was responsible for the delivery of some Commonwealth programs. It was disbanded in 2005. In 2002 ATSIC sought to develop a roll of those who were eligible to vote and therefore to stand and hold office as Regional Councillors. An extremely divisive debate ensued, with members of the established communities rejecting the Aboriginality claimed by others. Of those others, the most vociferous were the Lia Pootah.

⁴ NAIDOC Week is an annual, government-supported week of celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. It grew out of Aboriginal protest action regarding Australia Day. See <http://www.naidoc.org.au/index.aspx>

meetings, observation of peoples' appearance, deportment, responses, relationships, interactions and verbal communication could be conducted simply as a member of the audience. Wherever possible notes were taken as events transpired and short statements transcribed verbatim. Otherwise notes were made from memory as soon as possible after the event. Others' interpretations of the same events were gained through chance conversations with participants and later conferral with colleagues, friends and acquaintances who also attended.

Observation of these and other events and debates over the period also included a watch on television, radio, newspaper and magazine reportage in Tasmania and nationally. The period saw the emergence of the Lia Pootah community and the continuing debate over Aboriginality, the battle for the return of artefacts and human remains from museums particularly in the UK and the right to practice traditional culture, and the contested celebration of the Hobart Bicentenary in 2004.⁵ It also saw the change of policy paradigm under the Howard government which led to the demise of ATSIC and the development of shared responsibility agreements, and culminated in the intervention in remote Northern Territory communities.⁶

A number of Tasmanians participated in and/or published commentary on these events and debates, which then provided a longitudinal database of their various statements of attitude and belief that could be considered alongside their observed negotiation strategies in different social contexts (for example, changes of props to match different audiences, see Goffman 1969a). This provided good data on which to theorise the factors which shaped them. One also participated in an interview, and the resultant self-representation and self-performance provided even greater depth of data. It was also useful to note the different interpretations of

⁵ The celebration of the bicentenary of the settlement of Hobart was the cause of much controversy in 2003 and 2004. The original landing site at Risdon Cove in September 1803 was both unsuccessful and the site of a confrontation with Aborigines, and has since become a site of significance to Aborigines. The subsequent successful establishment of the colony was at Sullivan's Cove (now Hobart) in May 1804. The dominant Aboriginal organisation, the TAC, argued that to celebrate the bicentenary at Risdon Cove would have been insensitive, and though this position was not unanimous, the protest saw the celebration delayed until the latter date. See http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/H/Hobart.htm

⁶ The Commonwealth government took control of remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory in June 2007, imposing alcohol restrictions and welfare reforms, providing extra policing, modifying the control of entry and ownership of some lands and appointing managers of government business. See Altman and Hinkson 2007.

the same events made by different newspapers (such as *The Mercury* and *The Koori Mail*) and the rhetorical devices involved in their presentation. Other general interest stories told the lives of Aborigines prominent in mainstream and Aboriginal politics, academia, the arts, entertainment, sport, business and social welfare, and revealed their subjective difficulties and the strategies through which they negotiated their Aboriginality in contemporary Australia.

Semi-structured interviews

As had the work in schools, the above situations opened up opportunities for semi-structured interviews with individuals from all sectors of the Aboriginal Tasmanian population. The same sampling logic as above, to gain a varied and triangulated sample, was used to select and conduct semi-structured interviews with nine Aboriginal adults (see Appendix 2). One was the mother of a student met earlier. One had heard of the research project from others and expressed an interest in participating. Four were either students or staff at the university and another was met through a private research consultancy. Two were known from other work in Aboriginal affairs. These connections constituted points of entry and connectivity with the interviewees. Several of the interviews were conducted in places of work or home, one in a cafe, and all were tape-recorded with the participants' permission and later transcribed. Four were female and five male, all but one were employed as professionals or administrators, and they represented the main sectors of the Aboriginal community: four identified as members of the core (Bass Strait Islander, BSI) community, one of whom as a 'grass roots man'; two as members of the Dolly Dalrymple-Briggs (DD-B) and four the Fanny Cochrane-Smith (FC-S) communities. Combined with the student interviews, they ensured that a range of Aboriginal perspectives was included in the study. Interviews were not conducted with any who identified with the Lia Pootah community, though their perspective was included through observational and textual data.

The interviews were conducted with the advantage of relationships of some trust with the interviewees and some familiarity with the issues emerging, which made it possible for them to become collaborative conversational explorations (after Minichiello 1995) of issues of concern to the respondent. Interview

Schedule 2 (see Appendix 4) was used, with the content, language and order adapted to suit as the interview progressed. Meanings generated from the first stage of analysis were proposed and reflected on with the interviewees, and with some it was possible to explicitly consider the how they negotiated the dominant discourse. Three interviews with tertiary students centred on their struggle to reconcile the tensions between their analytical academic training and the essentialist identity discourse experienced at home and their fear of losing connection with family and associates. Another discussion focused on the issue of threats to the security of the foundational communities by latterly-identifying people and the struggle to negotiate government definition and internal Aboriginal politics. One interviewee became uncomfortable with the direction of the discussion and restricted it to concerns she had with the negative impact of schooling on Aboriginal identity.

Written records

As suggested above, a final source of data was textual material, which extended from media reports, to commonwealth and state government and Aboriginal community organisations' output. This material was selected for its potential to contribute to the elucidation of the processes under investigation (Rice and Ezzy 1999: 42). They included Commonwealth research reports (for example, Commonwealth of Australia 2000a, 2000b, 2002), policy frameworks (Commonwealth of Australia 2001), legal judgements (Commonwealth of Australia 2002b); State parliament second reading speeches, discussion papers (Arts Tasmania 2004; Government of Tasmania 2006), research reports (Government of Tasmania 2002a), policy frameworks (Government of Tasmania 2002b) and transcripts of television documentaries. 'Aboriginal' texts included transcripts of leading spokespersons' addresses, interviews, statements to the media, organisational communication (Mansell 31/8/04, 18/11/05), plus magazine articles and photographs, installation pieces and artwork.

Interpretive Analysis

Informed by the research literature and theoretical framework, the data was initially interpreted thematically, which revealed categories and patterns in

discourse and the meanings given them by participants. That analysis provided confusing and apparently contradictory data as below, and was complemented with semiotic analysis (Barthes 1968, 2000; Eco 1984) intended to explore further both patterned and chaotic assumptions and connotations.

Stage one: schooling

As indicated above, analysis of the data regarding situated meanings (Douglas 1967: 339) generated from observation and interviews, and that regarding abstract meanings from textual and audio-visual sources was begun near the end of the fieldwork in the second school. In the first two schools students and teachers made reference to and evidently routinely thought of the Aboriginality of their students in stereotypical ways. Both referred for instance, to Aboriginal difference, 'the' Aboriginal family or way of relating to others, a particular writing style and attitude to school, social difficulty and the need for the school to cater for their needs. At the same time though, the Aboriginal students had multiple identifications beyond their Aboriginality and little of the angst that the discourse indicated was to be expected. Many were well engaged in their schooling and had thoughts of career. At the same time as they enunciated it, teachers rejected the discourse. Thus, the data revealed patterns and contradictions surrounding pre-existing conceptual categories. The discursive Aboriginality was assumed and yet denied by teachers, variously claimed and not claimed by Aboriginal students or claimed in non-stereotypical ways, confirmed and contradicted in their friendship groupings, and complicated by their easy social acceptance within the student body and blatant multiplicity. Imagined difference coexisted with evident normalcy as did school expectations of students and student's discrepant perceptions of self. The initial stage of research then, suggested a disconcerting variability between discourse and enactment and a confusing partial confirmation and partial contradiction of expectations.

The patterns and departures were used to refine the research in the third school, in the north of the state, and at the end of the third period the ethnographic and textual data were manipulated using the techniques suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984: 215-30; 1994: 250-55; Kern 1970; Kellehear 1993: 40-1; Rice and Ezzy 1999: 192-201; May 2001: 137-42, 163-68, 190-96). Each of the data

sets was examined separately. Analysis of discourse in departmental policies and curriculum statements, as embedded in school programs and administrative and pedagogical practice, and in informal teacher commentary indicated a consistent set of categories, concepts, words, phrases and perceptions of Aboriginality. Analysis of Aboriginal political discourse suggested a similar and widely-shared perception of an idealised Aboriginality, oppression at the hands of ‘the government’ and a particular terminology.

Analysis of these discourses revealed differences within each across the levels of abstraction from the everyday. Comparison of the meanings given to Aboriginality in, for instance, Departmental documents, school publications, classroom talk and staff room conversations revealed increasing levels of ambivalence regarding the legitimacy of claims to Aboriginality with proximity to the everyday. Interviews and observations suggested a consistent dominant Aboriginal discourse but different patterns in regional and individual attachment to it. Observations indicated, and interviews confirmed, a hierarchy of Aboriginal status based on proximity to the ideal type, which favoured those from the core Bass Strait Islander community. It indicated too, that many in the south were not interested in attempts to introduce them to Aboriginal culture in the form of art or dance, while in the north there was a stronger identification with the national political discourse of continuing culture and resistance.

Checks across the data sets tested the quality of those and other findings and revealed further patterns. Comparison of discourses revealed shared images of Aboriginality, many nostalgic and romantic, and an emphasis on the structural cause of Aboriginal difficulties. Comparison of data from text, interview and observation confirmed regional divisions within the Aboriginal community. For example, all students were seen to enjoy multiple friendships beyond Aboriginal circles, and most individuals in the south confirmed this, while those in the north, who identified strongly with the discourse, tended to stress their Aboriginal and elide or stress the oppositional nature of their non-Aboriginal relationships. The same triangulation confirmed slippages between top-level discourse of significant difference and that of teacher-student interaction which minimised it.

Thus, some finer details and overlays of meaning slowly emerged. For instance, the master educational discourse, stressing individual freedom,

empowerment and personal development, existed alongside understandings of Aboriginal cultural difference that varied from romanticism and active promotion of Aboriginal rights to ambivalence, cynicism, negative stereotyping and resentment. Aboriginal students shared the discourse of rights and authenticity and were differently passionate about perceived governmental control. There appeared to be a correlation between the tension individuals felt between their several identifications, particularly their Aboriginality and Tasmanianness, and their regional affiliation and political consciousness.

These themes, in and of themselves, did not yet reach the level of ‘inferential’ analysis (see Miles and Huberman 1984: 221) needed to understand teachers’ or students’ taken-for-granted normative assumptions, nor their origins or relative valuations. They were neither sufficient to indicate in whose interests the different valuations occurred nor their impacts on participants. For this task, semiotic analysis was needed. Semiotic analysis facilitates the deconstruction of the invisible organising codes, rules and structures of discursive formations (Denzin 1989: 57), and can reveal that which is acknowledged, emphasised, elided or suppressed in the interactional text, and in whose interests it may be so. Most importantly, it can help to expose the assumptions that structure interactions and the meanings embedded in them.

Informed by the relevant research literature and the researcher’s experience of the field, semiotic analysis in this case enabled identification of those structures. Following Game (cited in Kellehear 1993: 48), the meanings of the participants in the interactions were read ‘across and against each other’. The representations of Aborigines in educational texts, from wording, phraseology and images, to arrangement of physical spaces and disposition of bodies, were searched for assumptions, connotations, valuations (of the supposedly authentic and assimilated Aborigine) and oppositions (such as between normalcy and difference, the good and bad student, the citizen and Aborigine).⁷ Analysis of Aboriginal discourse included examination of the symbols, utterances, behaviours and interactions to identify emphases (one being structural disempowerment), absences (Aboriginal agency at collective and individual level), metaphors (such as ‘pop-ups’ or ‘paper blacks’ in reference to authenticity) and metonymies. The

⁷ These oppositions are explained further in succeeding chapters.

discourses were compared to uncover unexpectedly shared concepts and judgements (of Aboriginality proposed by administrative discourse and taken up in self-presentation by Aborigines), idiosyncratic juxtapositions of meanings (such as the twinning of Aboriginal authenticity *and* assimilation) and shared silences (regarding for instance, Aboriginal discursive power).

Key events (Fetterman 1989: 93-5) in schooling—such as the editing of a video, teacher commentary in a geography lesson, an altercation in a fashion class, an ASSPA visit to an art gallery and casual arrangements for morning tea⁸—were crucial to this analysis in that they encapsulated and highlighted the embedded meanings. From them emerged some foundational understandings. They afforded for instance, evidence of routine normalisation, its positioning effect, teacher meanings at odds with the dominant discourse (of individual responsibility), divergent teacher and Aboriginal student meanings (of ‘good quality’), and consistency in conception and valuation of Aboriginal ‘authenticity’. Such events can be, as Fetterman says, metaphors for the culture, and act to reduce data and facilitate the discovery of patterns (Miles and Huberman 1984: 221-22). In this case they acted as metaphors for the culture of Aboriginal schooling, and were epiphanous events in the interpretation of that culture.

These and other key events revealed the operation of power within the imagined Aboriginal community, an internal hierarchy of authenticity and individuals’ ‘interpretive elasticity’ (Gubrium and Holstein 2000: 502) in their negotiation of the hierarchy: members of the core community actively marginalised some fellow students on the grounds of their presumed lack of authenticity, even as they included others regardless. Analysis of these key events led to realisation that the provision of cultural support through the ASSPA centres has become naturalised as a worthwhile thing to do, as has the invisibility of the fact that they are teaching an Aboriginality characterised by traditional culture and difference. The analysis also revealed, with that, the doubly-constituting effect of the dominant liberal discourse and equivalent Aboriginal discourse of tradition, alterity and cultural appropriateness. Once developed, such understandings guided the generation of further metaphor and metonymy, re-evaluation of earlier working interpretations and refinement of analysis.

⁸ These were instructive classroom incidents, considered in Chapter Four.

Stage two: aggregated data

At the conclusion of the second phase of research, the data included the discourses of state administration, education and Aboriginal politics which dominate the everyday social interactions of both young people and adults, in diverse regional, organisational and public contexts. The data included individuals' own stories as they told them in interviews and their performance of self as observed in different social situations and textually represented by others. The extra information yielded rich data regarding the production, dissemination, mobilisation and negotiation of powerful conditioning discourses, and the interactional context of Aboriginal reality from a number of angles. By this stage the data was beginning to reveal what was "really" going on (Babbie 1998: 283) for Aborigines in their social experience. The data complemented students' less mature capacity with adults' more sophisticated self-presentation (especially that of the political elite), and suggested the extent of the performative and social interactional skills needed to negotiate their discursive positioning as Aborigines.

The data was again analysed thematically and semiotically. Meanings were compared within and across the data sets in search of patterns and departures in the ascribed and subjective meanings of Aboriginality. Triangulation across educational, wider public policy and Aboriginal discourses revealed commonalities and differences. The data indicated that the governing educational and Aboriginal political discourses were notionally contestatory but in fact broadly shared many progressive notions of Aboriginal particularity, difference and sense of threat to Aboriginal continuity.

The stories individuals told in semi-structured interviews were compared with those they told to the media, and with those told of them by others in the media. Those stories were compared with their observed behaviours in different social contexts. The dominant discourse of Aboriginality in Tasmania was compared with that nationally, and the analysis extended to the personal stories and lives of Aborigines around the country, their representation in media of progressive and conservative inclination, and their consistencies with and departures from the political discourse. The added data highlighted the strategic nature of Aboriginal discourse and the consistent messages it connoted, but also the ambiguities of being Aboriginal and the personal strategies required to negotiate it. Comparison

of participants' performances of Aboriginality in several social encounters, including the interviews themselves, revealed multiple ambiguously different selves, all of which differed from the essential self of the discourse. Comparison indicated the motivations of many members of the political elite (including their personal jealousies and self-interests), their constant seeding of political discourse, and the deep discrepancies between the Aboriginality represented in that discourse, assumed in institutional practice, presented in individual self-stories and performed in everyday behaviour. This analysis developed more refined and 'meaningful data' (Coffey and Atkinson 1996: 47).

Again, key events such as an elaborate 'smoking' ceremony,⁹ an innovative response to the commemoration of an historical event,¹⁰ an interview with a 'dissident' individual¹¹ or the responses of audience members to a book launch,¹² were revelatory. They crystallised a great deal, for example the invention of tradition, the contestation between sectors of the Aboriginal community, the surface oppositionality and actual closeness of progressive and Aboriginal political discourses, and the gaps between discourse and lived reality. These events consolidated understanding and led to cascading realisations about the discourses, elite associations, political opportunism and allocation of cause for Aboriginal subalternity. They revealed Aboriginal claims of oppression and resistance as political, strategic and in part self-interested. They exposed distinctions between the identity enacted for purposes of impression management and the lived, everyday multiplicity of identities, and between what individuals said they did and what they actually did. The analysis problematised the claims that had originally motivated the project and began to expose them as examples of the Aboriginal discursive self-presentation. They led to a re-evaluation of the interview material and discovery of previously un-seen internal inconsistencies, which were exaggerated when compared with public utterances. This analysis

⁹ This ceremony, involving a ritualistic dedication to the four points of the compass, was conducted by Lia Pootah community members when launching a book written by their leading spokesperson, Kaye McPherson.

¹⁰ The Lia Pootah people celebrated the Hobart Bicentenary as both 'coloniser' and 'colonised'; see Chapter Five.

¹¹ This interview, under the pseudonym of 'Andrew', is explored in depth in Chapter Seven.

¹² This refers in particular to the laudatory comments made by a visiting academic in casual conversation immediately following one such event. The comments indicated complete acceptance of claims by a leading Aboriginal political entrepreneur to a mythical Aboriginal spirituality.

revealed the way in which those discursive truths were accepted as expressions of reality rather than being also constitutive of reality, and the ways in which their mobilisation contributed to the constitution of the Aboriginal problematic.

The mix of methods thus allowed individuals' subjective meanings of their experiences and self-presentation to be cross-checked against their negotiation of interactions in other contexts, allowing them to be placed in their bracketed discursive and socio-political context. For example, observation of the way Aboriginality is done in different contexts provided a way of checking what was said in interviews, which had raised issues perhaps not previously consciously considered by the individual, or for which rationalisations were offered. And observation of skilled Aboriginal social actors in their interactions with other Aborigines, academics, politicians and public provided data on the progressive discourse (regarding alterity, rights and Aboriginality) and on the artful manipulation of that discourse. The data produced through unobtrusive observation revealed the sources of the governing discourses of administration and Aboriginal politics, their contestation and internally-contested nature in the wider social sphere.

Conclusion

This analytics gradually revealed the authoritative universes of meaning in which Aboriginal individuals are immersed, which are brought to bear on them in governing subject formation, and which they mobilise and negotiate. It ultimately revealed the masquerade. The mix of empirical material and analysis above is indicative of the 'glossed thick', or 'intrusive' description (Denzin 1989: 95-9) which follows in the four succeeding chapters. In those chapters the analytic data is re-embedded in an account of the empirical situation that is sufficiently thick to provide an evidential base for the elaboration of the conceptual propositions that organise the thesis (see Lofland 1995: 50, 53-4). In outline, those propositions are as follows. Chapter Four proposes that liberal forms of governmentality, routinely at work in contemporary schooling, establish the base conditions which constitute contemporary Aboriginal reality, primarily in education but with indicators of wider effect, while Chapter Five argues that, in dialectical ways, Aboriginal identity politics contributes to the dynamics which constitute that reality. Chapters

Six and Seven show how the dynamic interaction of structural forces, sociality and individual action push individuals to choose to adopt Aboriginalities that are highly governed, but also how those dynamics can be negotiated in creative and liberatory ways.

Chapter 4 Liberal Governing Subjection

Introduction

Studies of school in the liberal governmentality tradition (see Burchell *et al.* 1991; Foucault 1988d) explore the role schooling plays in constituting specific subject types.¹ Liberal government works by optimising the operation of the various self-regulating domains of social interaction (including civil society, families and communities), fostering and channelling the autonomy of individual subjects through the intensification of contradictory desires and allegiances and shaping the ‘regulated and accountable choices’ they are faced with (Dean and Hindess 1998: 14-15; see also Rose 1996b). This chapter examines the ways in which schooling acts to have Aboriginal students govern or regulate their Aboriginality by subsuming it within a primary citizen selfhood.

This process of subjection entails the routine rendering of Aboriginal students as self-responsible and self-actualising proto-citizens, their inclusion in and investment with the capacities, status and rights (see Hacking 1986) of the category ‘Aborigine’, and the juxtaposition of those key subject positions. Because this categoric Aboriginal type is constituted as essentialist, monolithic, and dichotomously different from the normal citizen, the two subject types become apparently mutually exclusive and the juxtaposition acts to dispose individuals to choose the particular Aboriginal-citizen subject preferred by governing interests. This is less an intentional program of subjugation than an uncoordinated, partially conscious and imperfectly effective attempt to normalise the conduct of free entities. To suggest the complexity of the processes involved, Foucault (cited in Gordon 1980: 257) drew an analogy with ‘immense pieces of machinery, full of impossible cog wheels, belts which turn nothing and wry gear-systems: all these things which “don’t work” and ultimately serve to make the thing “work”’.

In the case of Tasmanian schooling, the machinery consists of colonialist, progressivist and Aboriginalist ‘governing mentalities’ that ‘work’ to subject Aboriginal students by imposing on them diverse pressures to approximate the

¹ Examples include the educated (Fendler 1998), child (Tyler, D. 1993; Baker 1998; Hultqvist 1998), student (Grant 1997), female (Orner 1998), Australian (Grundy 1994) and sexual (Tait 1993; Middleton 1998; Wagener 1998) beings.

preferred subject. The success of the process is limited however, despite the cultural, legislative, administrative, discursive and personal authority of those governing discourses, and the dominant outcome is a troubling of students' actual cultural and subjective multiplicity.

The chapter outlines the machinery and considers how and why it does and does not work. The first section explains how Aboriginal students are subjected as normal citizens and good Australians. However, also taken to be members of a different and potentially unruly population, they are the object of specific governing intervention, and the second section outlines the discursive imagining into being of the categoric Aboriginality that guides their governance. The final section details the diverse juxtapositionings of these two ideal subject types, the mix of seductive and constraining conditions of possibility it provides and their problematic subjective outcomes.

The constitution of Aboriginal students as *citizen* subjects

The school² on which this study is based responds to the diversity of student ages, genders, intellectual capacities, personal interests and cultural backgrounds via different class levels, streaming of pre-tertiary, general and vocational courses and a number of support structures for students with particular needs. It provides an alternative education for Aboriginal students who are at risk of becoming alienated from school. Most Aboriginal students are integrated within mainstream classes, with a majority in general, applied or vocational classes, and a minority in pre-tertiary classes. In their routine interactions those Aboriginal students are immersed in normative worlds of meaning which routinely subject them as normal citizen-subjects, in part by comparing that subject with those which depart from it. A minority of students are catered for in the alternative unit, and that minority is therefore somewhat isolated from routine subjection.

Nikolas Rose (1990, 1996a, 1996b, 1999) argues that advanced liberal government is achieved primarily by constituting a citizenry of free, rights-bearing and self-activating citizens. Under liberal rule, individuals are autonomous insofar as they adopt the particular form of freedom required; they are free by virtue of

² 'The school' is a composite of the three schools in which field work was conducted; see Chapter Three.

having ‘the capacity to realise one’s desires in one’s secular life, the capacity to fulfil one’s potential through one’s own endeavours, to determine the course of one’s own existence through acts of choice’ (Rose 1999: 84). Liberal governmentality seeks to produce such individuals, or model citizens, capable of self-actualising and self-responsible, but also socially-responsive and thus self-regulating behaviour. They have a ‘free—that is self-disciplined—agency’ (Rose 1999: 71). In fact social inclusion depends on this capacity to be autonomous in the liberal way, that is to be self-realising within internalised normative bounds.

Rose (1999: 72) argues that the school has been ‘one of [the] most important sites in which the issue of liberty was problematised and technologised’ and can be seen as a ‘kind of “machine” for assembling civilisation’. He (1999: 77) instances research which details the value of mathematics in constituting a citizenry capable of the calculative rationality required by commerce and democracy, and refers to Ian Hunter’s (1988) study of the critical study of English as a technology for the construction of a citizenry capable of active participation in a free society. Other studies have shown how primary and secondary schooling is a critical site of the creation of such a citizenry. Examples include Departmental policies of corporate managerialism (Goodwin 1996), the use of school uniforms (Meadmore and Symes 1996), teachers’ disciplining gaze, control of student behaviour and the panopticism of school space in older schools’ quadrangles, control of student performance through mass testing (Meredyth and Tyler 1993) and the ‘tightening of bodies’ (Corrigan 1991) in classrooms.

The normal self-actualising citizen

Senior secondary schooling in Tasmania continues the disciplinary normalisation of primary schooling but shifts more to the constitution, through technologies of the self (Foucault 1988c; Marshall 1995), of self-disciplining autonomous subjects. For example, though non-compulsory, the state has an interest in students continuing their education past Year 10, and because many students receive government support to continue their schooling, it also has the capacity to pressure their attendance. The school can as a result limit disciplinary compulsion in respect of attendance and performance. School policy, organisation, programs and teaching practices model the exercise of freedom required for civilisation, and

inculcate in students the necessary subjective capacities and habits for the exercise of freedom over both one's own self and over others as one acts upon them. The school treats students as subjects of right, as autonomous human beings, while also obliging them through the 'moral technology' of the school (Rose 1990: 223) to adopt particular normative ways and means of being.

As in the sceptical query 'How do you feel about the way you've been working in class?' in the context of arranging work contracts in an applied English class (5/9/01), teachers constantly require students to take responsibility for their own behaviour and work. They do not generally demand daily monitored performance of homework but nurture student work habits through work contracts and explicit encouragement to organise their time efficiently, accompanied by dire warnings of the consequences of failure to take responsibility (such as the threat to longer career objectives). They assess each student's 'ability to look at yourself and reflect like this, that is, self-assessment' (English, 22/8/01). The *Open Learning Study Planner* (Tasmanian Department of Education 2000a) offers advice regarding the planning of one's study, knowing one's self and one's 'learning style', how to 'reflect on your strengths and weaknesses as a student' (p. 12) and how to manage one's time, personal, goals and motivation to do so (pp. 29, 30). Students are told that the expectation is that they achieve to their own potential, not to some external standard.

Teachers work on implanting the desire for work and career and encouraging in students the desire to perform to their ability, and they have considerable capacity in this. Most teaching, and particularly in the social sciences and humanities, relies on a personal/pastoral relationship between teacher and student in which the teacher becomes a highly influential ethical exemplar (see Hunter 1988; Foucault 1988c). He/she corrects student reading of text, offering hermeneutic interpretation of the student self (Foucault 1979a: 69-70; 1987: 7) and moral correction and guidance with regard to improving the self against normative criteria such as the civilised habit of introspective criticism (Foucault 1987: 2). Ubiquitous assessment criteria such as 'negotiate, reflect upon and take responsibility for learning' and 'solve problems' support this fostering of awareness of, responsibility for, and capacity to realise self. Students know clearly the model citizen-subject self: according to one, it is the person who 'sets their

goals and goes for them, knows who they are and what they want' (AS5, 4/10/01). According to another, the college provides 'guidelines, but they're more pushing you to do it for yourself, not for them, kind of thing. They want everyone to become what they want to become' (AS6, 4/10/01).

The normal social citizen

Schooling also aims to produce tolerant and fair individuals 'who accept other people as well' (AS7, 27/9/01). The model citizen is also a *social* citizen, who must accept the conditions of his/her freedom in the form of a 'contract of civility' (Rose 1999: 72) which demands that freedom be exercised in respect of others in accord with certain norms or codes of civilised conduct, of sociality, civility, sensibility and rationality (see Rose 1990; 1999: 67-9). Liberal institutions such as the school, family and town (through the use of public space, for example) institute the civility and moral agency required to enact such freedom. They establish and inculcate norms of conduct—interactional etiquette, rational discussion, acceptable dress and comportment—and sensibility, including ideals, desires, aspirations, tastes, moral judgements and ethical conscience. They provide models for emulation. Both norms and models define and elaborate the capacities and competencies of the ideal individual. The normality they express is valorised as the socially worthy and desirable (Rose 1999: 76), as are those individuals who achieve it. Thus the model citizen, as Foucault (1977a) argued, references the self against, is amenable to claims made in the name of, and seeks to achieve, the normal.

Thus, schooling governs, or guides the conduct (see Dean 1994a; 1994b) of free students in the direction of a normative civility. It routinely constitutes the normal as socially worthy, desirable and natural, and makes it incumbent upon each self-actualising student to regulate his or her own self in an attempt to become the model citizen with those properties, since that will afford social acceptance and personal autonomy. Schooling establishes a consanguinity between conformity to averages and norms, moral goodness, social worth, personal autonomy, equality and social inclusion. Insofar as one is normal (that is, 'can govern oneself in accord with what is normal') one can be autonomous and

socially accepted/included. Conversely, personal autonomy and full social inclusion are dependent on being normal.

In Tasmanian mainstream classes, Aboriginal students are routinely constituted as heterosexual middle-class white Australian citizens. The process of becoming the normal citizen subject occurs in routine interaction with school administration and organisational expectations, by inference from teacher commentary, through the pedagogical relationship with teachers and via the curriculum. It occurs in all subject areas, where the normal subject positions are routinely and pervasively modelled, valorised and naturalised as ideals.

Unfortunately, the process of normalisation implies routine comparison with less ideal non-normal types, which also invisibly constructs and marginalises Aboriginal Tasmanian students as non-normal to the extent that they identify as Aboriginal. Over the course of a series of pre-tertiary Geography lessons concerning global settlement patterns and population distribution for example, the teacher consistently expressed deep cultural assumptions, immersed students (including three Aboriginal girls) in a modernising or social evolutionary logic and made available to students the normal subject position of middle-class white Australian. Whilst this subject position was highly valued, the teacher did not intentionally seek to make value judgements or to be exclusive. Rather, she consciously tried to construct an inclusive universal subject and to separate the primitive past from the present. Throughout, she identified 'us' and 'we' as 'human beings', 'humans', 'people' and 'everyone on the planet'. These terms were used in the sense implied in the comment 'We've learned heaps since the Exxon Valdez'.³ The teacher and we members of the class, as Australians, were always included in the universal 'we'.

However, the universal humanity was soon divided into civilised and primitive and more and less developed forms. 'We' became the civilised and more developed subject that assumed a settler-colonial heritage. The teacher told the class that the soil type, vegetation and climate of the (sometimes 'our') temperate forests and grasslands were ideal for humans and that 'we' humans settled there for that reason. Examples were northwestern Europe and the east coast of the

³ This was a reference to the oil tanker that ran aground in Prince William Sound, Alaska, in 1989, spilling 40 million litres of oil.

USA. Other places were 'unfavourable to human habitation' because of their extreme climatic conditions, soil type, remoteness and difficulty of access. The deserts were unfavourable and 'we didn't settle there, because they were too difficult to plough, isolated and a little bit difficult to get to' (24/4/02). Permafrost in the tundra 'causes construction problems' and the soil is 'not ideal for crops; people can't get in there and plough it up for wheat' (23/4/02). The thick vegetation of the tropical rainforests too, stopped human beings; they were 'just hot and wet all year [which] has been off-putting [and] caused diseases like cholera, malaria' (24/4/02), and were 'undisturbed for millions of years' (29/4/02) though we are now looking towards them to exploit and farm. The people who lived in these areas were 'primitive', and she gave as examples the Eskimos, people of the Amazon, Samoyds, 'a race of people who lived in Siberia', Laplanders (who 'herd animals') and the Australian Aborigines, Bedouins and Kalahari Bushmen.

Here she warned that she was 'talking of their primitive state. Remember many of these are non-existent today or don't live like they used to' (22/4/02), and went on to describe how through modernisation they have lost their traditions. Despite this rider, she categorised 'them' as the less developed societies, which don't have money or capital, though changes are afoot – 'if settlers can (as in California and Israel) get irrigation to the deserts it's OK', and 'human beings are now looking towards tropical rainforests to exploit and farm' (24/4/02). Thus the normal human came to be a civilised subject of the 'modernizing' developed world, and since the teacher consistently spoke from this position and 'we' Australians settled in the appropriate parts of Australia, we were included in that normal.

This normal human-ness and Australian-ness is unequivocally White. That is, it is of the industrial capitalist West rather than of a traditional or non-Western ethnicity; it is of the global centre rather than the periphery (see Waters 1995: 19-26). Since those other (including Aboriginal) forms of humanity lived and/or live in deserts, tundra or tropics where humans mostly did not, they are less civilised, less developed and so pre- or less than fully human. And since they (including Aborigines) are of the past, not the present, they are on both spatial and temporal grounds not part of the modern (including Australian) world. This same normal

Australian subject position was confirmed and extended in later teaching commentary regarding global population growth. The teacher said that ‘the Industrial Revolution made our life different; we had food reform,... we started to learn how to plough, to choose [our] animals,... we started to trade between continents. We’ve got clever with disease control,... keeping things clean and tidy, and we’re living longer.’ She also said that ‘we’ – those like us Australians in the developed world – ‘haven’t been good at stopping them having children ... the poorer countries, they’re having all the children’ (29/4/02).

This series of lessons then, overtly and covertly made available a normal, white, settler Australian citizen-subject. The ‘we’ is a modern Western, socially, technologically and culturally advanced, developed world ‘we’, juxtaposed to ‘them’, which was an inferior, primitive Other, spatially and temporally distanced from ‘us’. Through the operation of commonplace oppositions authorised by the teacher, as moral, aesthetic and critical exemplar, ‘we’ easily and unconsciously come to be superior. In these lessons the normal subject position was made available via officially specified curriculum, examination and certification, and the values implied in the particular teaching commentary. This occurs consistently across all subject areas.

The combination of models of normal explicit in the curriculum—society’s ‘official storylines’ (Grundy 1994: 17)—and implicit in teacher pedagogical commentary produces a pervasive naturalised normalcy. In another case, Australian history students were told (16/4/02) that with federation, ‘people with the same language, culture and traditions united ... [federation] united the white races in the Pacific, though New Zealand pulled out of the proposed federation’. They were also told that English history is ‘important [to us, because] people were coming from there’. A tourism teacher reinforced the message of Australia’s Anglo heritage by saying that ‘we are used to seeing our parents preparing Christmas pudding’ (23/4/02). The applied subject Working with Children and its Vocational Education and Training (VET) variants teach ‘the’ normal human maturational stages (averages which ‘make up people’, see Hacking 1986), model household and family types, parenting methods and diet. A Catering teacher inflected standard curriculum regarding food, its preparation and consumption with high culture etiquette: the laying of the table (kind of glasses and cutlery,

underplates, placement of salt), balancing of colours and accoutrements for romantic dinners (27/3/02). Art and English teach highly conventionalised notions of taste, quality and critical appraisal. And the teacher's apparently unreflexive normative understandings and expectations contradicted and overwhelmed the lack of overt curricula models in Lifestyle and Fashion (26/3/02).

Another example of mundane subjection occurred in a Media Studies class (19/3/02), in which two Aboriginal boys were producing a video which they hoped to get accepted for a show on local television which celebrated the diversity and potential of local youth. They had conducted and filmed several interviews with young people in the local mall, and were editing the footage with their teacher, to have it ready for submission to the judging panel. At the teacher's prompting, they gradually eliminated footage of individuals who deviated from the unstated but insistent model normal youth, in particular one young 'mallie' who, as he spoke, constantly sniffed and wiped his nose on the sleeve of his jacket.⁴ The end result was a film of attractive looking, responsible, articulate middle-class white youth. The two Aboriginal boys were apparently so used to that model and their own position *vis-a-vis* it that they noticed nothing out of the ordinary. One of them, who was from a rural area and dressed very much like the young man eliminated, had though, suggested (to no avail) that he would prefer if they did not focus so much on one of the model youth who featured heavily: 'We don't have to listen to her all the time do we?'

A third example comes from a general education class in Lifestyle and Fashion (26/3/02). In such classes the curriculum pressure is less than in pre-tertiary classes. The teacher of this class said that 'there is a structure, but it is open-ended to cater for individual differences. The [students] have to work within a framework but can do their own thing. The pressure is to extend themselves in creative expression, not [for] exams'. However, her naturalised notions of quality and modesty shaped her judgements and imposed them upon an Aboriginal student in one small interaction. Students were making dresses for a coming social event. Many were made up and dressed in brand-name gear, but one Aboriginal girl was different. She told me that women suffer social pressure to look good, that she and her friends refused to conform to that pressure, and that that is why

⁴ See note 5 below.

they dressed as ferals. She was making a dress out of an old fishing net, some scallop shells and a sequinned mermaid tail. As they worked the teacher circulated, ascertaining progress, identifying problems and advising how to resolve them, and eventually came to the Aboriginal girl.

As the interaction progressed, the student looked increasingly unhappy. Afterwards, she explained that she was unhappy because the teacher had said that her dress was not well-finished and too immodest. Separately, the teacher said that she was not being judgemental, that all she wanted was that the girl would do good work, work of high quality, by which she meant neat and tidy hems, which would last a long time, a dress which could perhaps be marketed, and with a more modest bust. The student had a different definition of high quality: if it were to be sold she imagined it in a grunge shop. I read this as indicative of the way that, despite the class apparently encouraging free expression, in fact it is free expression within invisible normative bounds, which contribute to normalising subjection.

The pedagogical technique of locating abstract principles in real-world contexts of interest and familiarity to students compounds this encapsulating normality and comparison with non-normality. Mathematics exercises are based in cosmopolitan lifestyles and interests such as international travel and currency exchange rates; commercial interests such as taxation and loan interest rates; and technological interests such as surveying, building and real estate (15/4/02), or with less advanced classes, calculation of car speeds and petrol usage (24/9/01).

This use of meaning-giving context is standard pedagogical technique. Alongside that of the teacher as ethical exemplar, and accompanied by informal teacher-student interaction in the school grounds and more formal interaction in daily pastoral care classes, it serves to habituate the normal and its alternatives. An illustrative example of this is friendly teacher banter in a pastoral care class about a school meningococcal campaign, which became a site of the production of heterosexuality. After announcing a school campaign which sought to make students aware of the dangers of intimate contact, the female teacher said to her male colleague that she couldn't 'kiss him any more in public, or in private', and he replied that 'We'll have to go to rubbing noses, if we haven't got runny noses' (16/4/02).

These models of normal Australian-ness as bourgeois white become, in the person of the teacher, through their repetition and the energy invested in them, dominant ideals accorded moral worth, social validity and desirability. They are installed as the natural standard against which unconscious and invisible judgements of value, worth and goodness are made. Thus the aforementioned video teacher judged the raw footage to contain youth of varying degrees of aesthetic and social worth and guided her students to edit in those who best fitted the model—the well-mannered, well-dressed, socially concerned and articulate—and edit out those less desirables, like the sniffing inarticulate and, by association, the two Aboriginal editors. The taken-for-granted nature of such normalcy was an unproblematic issue for the teachers, and also explains the Fashion teacher's non-comprehension of the Aboriginal student's frustration.

Consistent with this combination of the valorised normal and the debased non-normal, teachers often talk of students who are successful and/or extend themselves, in terms of goodness or otherwise, in the way that one teacher did when worrying about an Aboriginal student who had started to miss classes and not complete work. She said that it was a shame because 'he was a good one' (7/5/02). Good students are the ones selected to take visiting dignitaries on guided tours of the school facilities and it is these students whose photographs, names and achievements line the walls of entrances, offices and halls. These are the academically, artistically and athletically successful.

The implicit othering and inferiorisation of non-normalcy

As has been evident in the above, this imbuing of the model citizen-subject with positive value depends on its routine opposition to, and has the corollary of routinely constructing, other less ideal subject types (see Said 1979: 1-2; Prakash 1995). The good Australian was constituted in opposition to the non-white races and less developed nations in geography and history. The values of tolerance and fairness said to characterise Australian-ness were constituted similarly in a tourism lesson (26/3/02) via favourable comparison with the restrictiveness of other countries:

USA used to ask: "Are you homosexual?" If you ticked yes, you couldn't get in. Singapore is another, if you've got long hair... In some

countries if you don't look like the way you should look, they won't let you in. Those societies have harsh penalties, so don't think what is acceptable in our country is OK for all countries.

A similar opposition occurred in a discussion about an Indonesian village when the teacher compared teaching methods, child labour and a chef's sweaty shorts and spoon-licking with contemporary developed Australia: 'We used to be ... really dirty and ratty ... like that in Tasmania ... What about child labour? We can't do that in Australia' (Indonesian, 24/4/02).

These instances indicate the way in which the model Australian is discursively constituted as something of moral worth with which one ought identify and the different (desert-dwellers, non-whites in the Pacific, less developed countries, messy students) are devalued and constituted as abnormal, odd, not 'us', of little import to and inferior. A similar positioning occurred in the geography lessons above when the teacher told the class that the smallpox virus was stored 'somewhere *weird* like Russia', rather than somewhere one might have expected, like a developed country. And in a discussion of youth homelessness and eating disorders (Sociology, 24/8/01), the families and parenting styles of Spanish, Greek and Italian Australians were considered atypical by unstated reference to the Anglo-Australian standard, and peripheral to us, the Anglo nation. Unlike English history, which was central to Australians and the Australian story, these people were different and not constitutive of the national standard and story. They and their values were not in themselves represented negatively—in fact they were considered to be 'more nurturing than Anglos'—but still different and peripheral to us.

None of this positioning was intentionally negative. The discussion of parenting was an attempted positive representation but in the context of discussion couched in oppositions, such as between 'normal household', 'standard house' and homelessness, and between normal and eating *disorders* like bulimia and obesity, it reinforced a parenting standard. Nurturing was good but it did not gain acceptance as Australian-ness. This may have been because it was represented as also being sexist: the women were expected to cook for the boys, who were then spoilt and did not learn how to become independent.

Teachers' influence in the constitution of other dimensions of normal Australianness, namely as heterosexual and middle-class, and their binary opposites, extends to their classroom banter. Comments like the following, which juxtapose the normality of heterosexuality to the oddity of other sexualities, act to reinforce the former and impose negative pressure on the latter: 'Girls, it's quite OK to wear a bow tie; guys I don't expect you to be in a skirt ... [to one boy, askance] though you did say something to me yesterday and I'm a bit worried' (Catering, 27/3/02). Even their failure to actively intervene in student discussion can have an authorising and habituating effect. Since student experience is so central to pedagogy, classroom discussion easily turns to teasing individuals about their socio-economic status: one class laughed good-naturedly at one boy who they said should know the location of a soup kitchen (SOSE, 22/8/01); another expressed incredulity that a girl came from a working class suburb (Indonesian, 26/3/02); another teased one girl as a bogan⁵ (Psych/Soc, 22/8/01). One teacher said that an Aboriginal student in his class

speaks well, mixes easily, what she says is usually really good, only the way she speaks marks her, as if written on her forehead, "I am a second class citizen, I didn't come from [selective state school]". In a lesson she might say "Me and my friend were doing drugs and some fucken" This gives the others in the class something to put her down with (Psychology teacher, 21/8/01).

To this point in normalisation processes, schooling provides conditions of possibility within which students can become the ideal self-actualising and socially-responsive citizen. It provides the normative model of self which one ought to strive for, advice and training in the ways to assess and work on oneself to achieve it, and evidence of the social acceptance to be gained by doing so. In the process it also constitutes and naturalises the clear distinction between the normal and the odd, deviant, marginal and, by implication, Aboriginal. Finally, it legitimates and validates these conditions through assessment, examination, reports to parents and constant exhortations (more in pre-tertiary and vocational

⁵ This is a colloquial term used to describe people of lower socio-economic status. It can be used interchangeably with the term 'mallie', after the habit of bogans to congregate in the city mall.

classes) to meet the expectations of ‘the marker’, which becomes the student’s inner conscience.

The constitution of Aboriginal students as *Aboriginal* subjects

The schooling routine above reflects the liberal humanist and Enlightenment principles of a universal human nature, the Cartesian ‘self-defining, all-knowing, formally empowered’ (Gandhi 1998: 37) subject of consciousness and the Kantian notion of enhanced rationality as the means to an advanced form of humanity (see Foucault 1997). It is dedicated to the task of producing more fully human subjects capable of mature adult rationality, able to realise sovereign selfhood and contribute to a progressive, just society. To poststructuralists like Foucault and Derrida, schooling assumes a civilisational and social hierarchy in which more knowledgeable and rationally-trained selves are more civilised, more human and ‘more substantially the measure of all things’ than others (Gandhi 1998: 30; see Foucault 1997; 1980c: 52-4; Derrida 1974). They saw that it equipped the West with the intellectual drive and tools to gain mastery of the world in its own self-referential terms.

Said (1979) applied poststructuralist logic to the study of the colonial mission, treating scholarly and popular ways of thinking about the Orient as a ‘prodigious machinery’ of rules, procedures and exclusions which controlled what could and could not be said about the Orient, when and in what circumstances. He argued that Orientalist discourse imagined a series of oppositions between a primitive, irrational and childlike subject of the East and a civilised, rational and adult West. This locked the colonised subject in an oppositional, inferiorised and dependant relationship with the coloniser. He and others (Memmi 1965; Nandy 1983; Fanon 1986) revealed how the colonial period instituted a world of binary oppositions and ‘hierarchies of subjects and knowledges—the coloniser and the colonised, the Occidental and the Oriental, the civilised and the primitive, the scientific and the superstitious, the developed and the developing’ (Prakash 1995: 3).

The ideal typical Aboriginal subject

These interpretations are fundamental to an analysis of the civilising mission as it has been directed at the ‘usual suspects’, the poor, unemployed, homeless,

delinquent, truant and indigenous, that are thought to remain ‘outside [the] regime of civility’ (Rose 1999: 88). They explain the universalist assumptions and persistent colonialist oppositions, inferiorisations and marginalisations that negatively constitute alterity in the routine classroom interactions considered in the first section of the chapter above. Those interactions simultaneously constitute the romanticised traditional Aboriginal subject position by its mundane opposition to normal and the contemporary degraded version of that subject position by its comparison with that traditional form. Those versions of the Aboriginal subject are represented in a plethora of statements of research, policy, plan and program at Commonwealth, State and school levels that ground a parallel *active* process of constituting the Aboriginal subject.

The Aboriginal subject position predominantly imagined in those documents is the outcome of contestation between the historically dominant negative colonialist discourse and an ascendant progressive discourse that recuperates it. The documents take a progressive stance in that debate, valorising the romantic dimensions of the colonialist subject, incorporating all Aborigines in a categorical identity and reversing the colonialist hierarchy. However, they retain the underlying binary distinction, and by positioning the Aboriginal subject as the victim of state power, also reprise the colonialist inferior non-agentic Aborigine. Thus they initiate the imagining into being of the recuperated subject position, but in an unhelpfully ambivalent way.

Two key curriculum documents, the *Aboriginal Studies K-12 Framework for Curriculum Developers (Framework)* and accompanying *Guidelines 9-12* (Tasmanian Department of Education, n.d.), overtly adopt the progressivist stance in proposing the Aboriginal Tasmanian subject as identical with the foundational Aboriginal subject and the victim of colonial dispossession and on-going systemic ethnocentric and racist discrimination. However, that recuperation represents the negative manifestations of the relationship as the direct consequence of dispossession, discrimination and ethnocentrism and in doing so reinscribes the colonised subject as childlike (Nandy 1983: 15-16), inadequate and dependent.

These texts contest the historically-dominant representation of Aborigines as primitive, uncivilised, inferior, inadequate and marginal to Australian society, and instead present a ‘dynamic’, ‘diverse’, ‘adaptive’ and ‘complex’ Aboriginal

subject of the present, that is a central part of Australian heritage, society and identity. They aim for students to ‘develop a respect for’ and ‘positive attitudes about, Aboriginal people and their cultures’ (*Framework*: 10). And against the historically dominant notion of benign settlement, they stress ‘invasion’ (*Framework*: 4, 5), ‘occupation’ (*Guidelines*: 8-9), ‘genocide’ (*Guidelines*: 14), ‘the Risdon massacre’⁶ (*Guidelines*: 8), a relationship of ‘prejudice, stereotyping and racism’ (*Framework*: 4), and the need to respect ‘human rights and responsibilities’ (*Framework*: 5). They acknowledge and seek to inform students of the culpability of state, government and wider society in Aboriginal circumstances, and refute the notion of passivity by affording Aborigines agency. This is reflected in the requirement (*Framework*: 7) that teachers ‘consult’, ‘gain advice from’ and defer to Aborigines.

Within this rhetorical recuperation, the texts retain the romanticising elements of the colonialist imaginary and inflect the category with them. The Aboriginal self is the subject of tradition, orality, the ancient communal past and ‘Homelands’ (*Framework*: 5). Because Aboriginal Tasmanians are identical to Aboriginal Australians of the past and the present, ‘the Dreaming’ and oral tradition continue to be significant to them, and they have a ‘variety and diversity of languages’, knowledge of the natural environment, complex social and kinship ties and a close and spiritual relationship with land, sea and inland waters (*Framework*: 5). The Aboriginal self is also the victim of continuing governmental oppression, racism, discrimination and denial of human rights, but has been obdurate in its resistance and refusal to assimilate. Consequently, it is still ‘distinctive’, so specific Aboriginal learning skills such as ‘listening, observing, practising are important to Aboriginal people’ and must be ‘emphasised’ (*Framework*: 3, 6).

Both documents then, recuperatively re-imagine Aboriginal culture and subject from a progressive, broadly anti-colonialist position. However, that recuperation is compromised by the colonialist Aborigine that underwrites both documents. Many of the Activity Starters in the *Guidelines*, for instance, emphasise landedness and difference alongside an inferiorising lack of agency: Aborigines are the passive objects of external forces, not the complex, agentic participants of the rhetoric. In

⁶ This is a reference to conflict between settlers and Aborigines at Risdon Cove in May 1804; see Ryan 1996: 75; Connor 2008: 172. The reference here glosses debate about the extent of the conflict and the fact that it is woven into Aboriginalist narrative and used for political purposes.

fact, the suggested activities often default to the colonialist subject more generally as reference point:

- Describe the impact of Western technology ... on different Aboriginal groups (p. 14);
- Explore patterns of migration of Aboriginal people ... to urban areas (p. 13);
- Explain the significance of land, sea and water systems to Aboriginal people ... who have left their homelands ... (p. 24);
- Describe the effects of industries on Aboriginal ... environments (tourism, ecotourism) (p. 13);
- Identify the impact of Western religion on Australian Aboriginal ... spirituality (p. 21).

Thus, Tasmanian Aboriginality is monolithic and unchanging rather than, as rhetorically claimed, diverse, adaptable and of-the-present. Secondly, the *Framework* (pp. 3, 7) requires that curriculum be planned, developed, delivered and evaluated in partnership with Aborigines, in order that it ‘reflect the diversity of the living and dynamic culture of the Tasmanian Aboriginal communities’ and provide ‘an authentic Aboriginal perspective’. This assumes and implies the naive colonialist subject being denied. It imagines Aboriginal informants uninfluenced by ideology, politics or power and incapable of self-interested self-presentation, anything but the complex, adaptive, agentic subject of rhetoric. Thirdly, the Aboriginal subject is constituted as deeply distinct from other Australians despite the rhetoric of being part of the nation, and as necessarily so on the basis of its Aboriginality.

One objective of Aboriginal Studies is to develop in students the ability to ‘recognise prejudice, stereotyping and racism’ (*Framework*: 4), another (*Framework*: 5) to account for the universal human tendency to bias by gaining information from a range of viewpoints, and part of the rationale is for students to appreciate ‘how events are interpreted by different people’ (*Framework*: 9). However, these apply to settler Australians, not Aborigines, who are in the texts apparently in possession of a transcendent truth which will ‘provide an accurate, honest and balanced view of Australian [and] Tasmanian history’ (*Framework*: 9). And they are not racist and will tell this truth. Their Aboriginality is then, a

unitary identity that ‘thickly’ (see Cornell and Hartmann 1998: 73-7) determines their interpretations of and responses to the world.

Thus the progressive Aboriginal subject is shadowed by the colonialist subject, and is both confirmed and contradicted by it. And the established ensemble of discourses orders the ‘incessant, disorderly buzzing’ of discourse (Foucault 1971: 21) around Aboriginality to restrict valid debate to certain ‘speaking subjects’ and to certain core topics or concepts (see Foucault 1971: 15-19; 1978). These include the foundational traditional Aborigine, Aboriginal distinctiveness, the Aborigine as victim of state oppression and racism, and thus the Aborigine with rights. In the documents each of these is a strong presence though left to assumption, and able to go unquestioned. For example, the stress throughout the documents on racism, prejudice, discrimination and human rights implies without any explicit statement that this is a matter of state and societal responsibility *to* Aborigines. At the same time, reference to Aboriginal racism or other forms of agency is entirely absent (see Foucault 1971: 18-21). The discursive ensemble has, having ‘ceased to be discourse linked to the exercise of power’, come to be accepted as a ‘true discourse’ (Foucault 1971: 10).

The features of this Aboriginal culture and subject are replicated in the guiding departmental policy document (TDoE n.d.). While it acknowledges contemporary Aboriginal reality, the Aboriginal subject is the ‘unique’ custodian of the land whose identity is consistent with its past. It is expected that schools will adapt to acknowledge the ideal-typical Aboriginality and that provision of ‘culturally relevant resources and teaching approaches’ will improve Aboriginal participation and educational outcomes. In this, the Department assumes the metonymic subject that can provide the ‘truth’ regarding Aborigines and their needs, alongside the mute and passive subject. The features are also replicated in two curriculum resources: the seven books in the *Living with the Land* series (TDoE: 1989-91) and the 2001 publication, *On the Track* (TDoE: n.d.).

As were the *Framework* and *Guidelines*, these documents were produced by Departmental personnel with considerable Aboriginal individual, community and organisational input. The acknowledgements in both indicate that, in line with national and State policy, accepted practice and in the expectation of gaining accurate and unbiased truth, information and interpretation was provided by

cultural and political leaders of the core community and to a lesser extent those of the other communities.

The *Living With the Land* series tells the narrative of traditional life and the historical record, using the work of respected scholars such as Plomley (1966; 1987), Jones (1974), Mollison (1978), Ryan (1981), Reynolds (1981, 1987), Clark (1983) and Robson (1983). Book Seven focuses on the community in the Bass Strait and those in the south and north-west during the twentieth century. Via thematic grouped personal testimony and commentary, this book constructs the identity of these communities with the authentic Aboriginal subject. The dominant interpretation is of continuity of link with the tribal past. Nostalgic memories of communal cohesion and self-sufficiency are presented as Aboriginality (p. 62) in and of themselves, mutton-birding as ‘retained’ tribal tradition (p. 63), premonitions and the ‘feeling of closeness to the spirits’ as innate Aboriginal spirituality (pp. 74-7) and interest in the bush and hunting as ‘just like something calling you’ (p. 78).

This is the main message even as the Aboriginal contributors acknowledge their European genetic, economic, social and cultural heritage, their adaptation and loss of tradition, assimilation and vexed personal identification. But such change is imposed—Aborigines did and do not actively adopt white ways but resist them—and in any case heritage, tradition and identity always prevail:

[O]ur knowledge of cultural ways—our language, food, customs and lifestyle—has changed with our changed circumstances. Despite this our links with our heritage are still strong. Most of us still know about what we call black fellas’ tucker in the bush and we still know many words of our language. Our ways are very different from the white man’s and so is the way we relate to each other (p. 62).

On the Track (TDoE 2001a), an Aboriginal Studies resource for early childhood, establishes contemporary Tasmanians’ Aboriginality by focussing on traditional activities and the essential sameness between contemporary and past times. A prefatory comment (p. 3) presents Aboriginal Tasmanians’ urban lifestyle and work in a full range of occupations as evidence of a continuing 40, 000 year tradition of creativity and inventiveness. This is the teleological interpretation of history to make the present diversity of socio-political arrangements, economic

practices, lifestyles, expressions of culture and identifications essentially the same as those of the distant past and uniquely different from everyone else. A widely-used SOSE resource (Healy 1998: 5) makes the same move, claiming that ‘despite the tremendous pressure to assimilate [today’s Aboriginal families] have in many ways resisted and are still unique’.

These teaching resources and policy are aligned with Commonwealth of Australia (CoA) curriculum frameworks (CoA 1989; CoA 1999) which are themselves based on continuing governmental research (for example, Purdie et. al. 2000; Ministerial Council on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) 2000a, 2000b; CoA 1994; 2000a; 2000b; 2002) which assumes a monolithic national Aboriginality, defaults to the remote and traditional, and uses Australian Bureau of Statistics or departmental statistics to ‘make up’ (Hacking 1991) the categoric stereotypes (of for example, socio-economic disadvantage and educational failure) and elide the differences between remote, rural and urban populations. Moreover, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC 1991a; 1991b) and the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) (1994; 1995a; 1995b) use the same corpus of expertise and data, focus similarly on social justice and assume the same Aboriginal culture and subject.

The Council (1995b: 1) recognises ‘that there is of course a diverse range of cultures and histories among indigenous Australians, but ... in the context of this paper the similarities in their experiences, and the contrast with those of non-indigenous Australians, are highly significant’. CAR (1995b: 36-7) considers Aborigines a distinct category and the categoric Aborigine as a unitarily different, communitarian, remote, above material need and only instrumentally modern subject:

An approach [to citizenship which recognises group rights] is more consistent with indigenous Australians’ ways and values ... Indigenous Australians are confronted with a dilemma: they seek to maintain their own cultures while also participating in the broader society and economy. This is often erroneously perceived as indigenous Australians wanting ‘the best of both worlds’ – that is the economic benefits of the Western market economy without the commitments. But many indigenous Australians seek involvement only to the extent

that it gives a basic standard of living and contributes to the sense of purpose of the group and its members; they are prepared to forsake larger incomes in order to retain their cultures. There are many who, if they chose to operate as individuals, could succeed in mainstream society but who have chosen to give their psychic and other energies to their group rather than to the promotion of themselves as individuals.

The Council explains the contemporary disadvantage and dysfunction of that categoric subject as the direct consequence of colonial dispossession and on-going systemic ethnocentrism and discrimination. It argues that alienation from land and sea, marginalisation from full participation and inappropriate mainstream institutions have destroyed the integrity of Aboriginal social and cultural systems and disempowered and psychologically traumatised Aborigines. It argues that, since those circumstances are the responsibility of the state and wider society, to overcome them governments must provide culturally supportive, appropriate and inclusive services and facilitate self-determination. It expects that such responses will facilitate cultural recovery, improved self-esteem and more equitable outcomes. However, in the process the victimhood dimension of the Aboriginal subject is elaborated, and the Aborigine becomes inadequate to contemporary life, incapable of adaptive change and problematic.

Realising the imagined ideal type

These ‘culturalist’ (McConachy 2000: 51-126) or ‘Aboriginalist’ (Attwood 1992a: i-xii) notions of homogeneous Aboriginal cultural difference and unitary selfhood, and the causal logic and proposed course of action that accompany them, are consistent across the documents above, and the school has implemented a number of changes based on their perceived ‘authority ... neutrality and efficacy’ (Rose 1996b: 39). It has developed and provided cross-cultural training programs, employed Aboriginal workers and special counselling staff, attempted to make the school environment more welcoming to Aboriginal students and their families, and adjusted school curriculum and pedagogy to make it more inclusive of Aboriginal perspectives and responsive to Aboriginal learning styles, life experiences and interests. The school takes the imagined categoric subject as real,

acts on the expectation that individual Aboriginal students will conform to its preferences, needs and difficulties, and thus contributes to the constitution of individuals in its image.

The school caters for some Aboriginal students by including them in a group operating a schoolroom-based restaurant selling lunches to staff and students and basing standard syllabus in its operation. The class is managed by a teacher who follows strategies, like embedding the syllabus in concrete problem-solving situations recommended at a national Aboriginal education conference. The program is made possible by funding from the Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness (ASSPA) program and a state-based vocational training program. On one occasion the class catered for an ASSPA gathering which included parents of many of the students. The restaurant was decorated with Aboriginal books, posters, art (produced in the art class with a visiting Aboriginal elder) and retold traditional children's stories, all of which, students (AS11 7/11/01; AS15, 9/11/01) said meant nothing to them. When she had lunch in the restaurant one day, the Aboriginal elder who had helped produce the art displayed around the wall, appreciated the approach, but the class teacher herself had no idea whether or how the students' Aboriginality had any impact on their learning; nor whether or how the teaching approach was culturally appropriate. She was bemused, but trusted that the students would do better by this accommodation of difference. When interviewed, the same two officially Aboriginal students (AS11 7/11/01; AS15, 9/11/01) said they had no attachment to their Aboriginality.

Two teachers run a comprehensive ASSPA program. As evidence of the school's commitment, they too have attended national conferences focused on the teaching of Aboriginal students. They are supported by two visiting regional Aboriginal Education Workers (AEWs). The teachers organise and lead regular meetings with students in the school, social events with interested parents, excursions to sites of heritage and historic importance (Wybalenna,⁷ Rocky Cape⁸

⁷ Wybalenna was the site of the Aboriginal Settlement on Flinders Island between the years 1833-1848, during which time a great many of the original number died. In 1848, the remaining Aborigines were moved to Oyster Cove; see Ryan 1996: 183-204.

⁸ Rocky Cape, on the north-west coast of Tasmania, is a significant site because it provides evidence of long-standing Aboriginal presence in Tasmania; see McFarlane 2008: 4, 13, 15.

or Oyster Cove⁹ among others), visits to Aboriginal art and dance exhibitions, and joint activities with the ASSPA groups of other schools. These teachers are energised by the drive to counteract students' assumed life and school experience and to help them recover their lost or degraded Aboriginal culture, identity and sense of community. They try to re-establish a supportive Aboriginal community and re-connect students with (the authentic) Aboriginal culture. They teach that imagined Aboriginality and by default render the actually lived Aboriginality less real. They also conduct regular sessions for other class groups throughout the year, seeking to enhance teachers' and students' sensitivity to Aboriginal history, culture and current social circumstances, with similar aims.

The school's progressive response to Aboriginal culture, subjectivity and educational need is epitomised in an alternative education unit ('the unit'). The unit caters for Aboriginal students who are at risk of disengagement from school, as well as an increasing number of mature-age Aboriginal students doing secondary education by distance or mixed mode. The unit was developed at the instigation of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC), which sees it primarily as a means of keeping their young people off the streets and out of trouble, and a majority of the students are members of, or closely associated with, the core community.¹⁰ The school sees the unit in educational terms more as an attempt to bring the same students 'back in' to standard education. It is managed by a teacher with long personal experience and nuanced understanding of local Aboriginal students' social and educational needs.

The approach in the unit is guided by hegemonic notions of difference, separateness and unitariness, and the orthodox curricula, pedagogical and environmental adaptations to suit the characteristic needs. It minimises the normalisation that routinely occurs in mainstream classes by relaxing discipline in respect of attendance, timetabling, curriculum content and assessment. It celebrates the ideal-typical Aboriginality by displaying national and state Aboriginal iconography, lionising Aboriginal sporting heroes, housing Aboriginal Studies books and videos, and basing teaching in sensitive treatment of

⁹ Oyster Cove was the site of a former penal station in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel in the southern part of Tasmania, to which the forty seven Aborigines who survived Wybalenna were removed in 1848. It was effectively closed when Truganini moved to Hobart in 1874; see Ryan 1996: 205-21.

¹⁰ The core community is primarily the Bass Strait Islanders; see Prefatory Notes, p. v.

Aboriginality and current marginalised social circumstances, including home dysfunction and jail. The unit has had some success in terms of keeping students engaged in school, but the approach it takes magnifies the imagined difference and celebrates a resistant marginality which equates real Aboriginality with marginality.

Over and above these responses to the imagined Aboriginality, the school works to develop a more culturally sensitive and supportive social and physical environment by inviting elders to talk, paint and teach, hosting visiting indigenous performers, holding social events for the local Aboriginal community and permanently and prominently displaying artistic depictions of Aboriginal culture and history. Teachers in the humanities and social sciences incorporate the less contentious topics of traditional Aboriginal society or colonial history into their teaching, and some structure discussion of contemporary Tasmanian issues, particularly in Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE), Sociology/Psychology and History.

The constitution of Aboriginal students as *Aboriginal-citizen* subjects

The combination of the passive constitution of Aborigines by their default opposition to models of normalcy in schooling routine and the discourses-in-practice in the positive interventions above, imagine into being Australian citizen and Aboriginal subject types similar to the historic protagonists constituted through Western scholarship and colonial relationships. The colonised subject was perceived, against the West's humanist view of itself as the pinnacle of human progress, as primitive, immature and emotive (Nandy 1983: 15-16). Though they were at times noble, they were more often savages living in a state of barbarism, lazy, dirty, untrustworthy, brutish and sub-human (Fanon 1986: 98-114), the antithesis of the colonisers' rationality, civilisation, mature adulthood, efficiency and productivity. Civilisational inferiority justified colonial stewardship and imposed on the coloniser a sense of obligation to bring the colonised, via a broadly educating project, into human enlightenment, progress and freedom.

In Australia, historians such as Beckett (1988b) and Attwood (1989) have demonstrated similar colonial processes of classifying and stereotyping by which

aboriginal peoples came to adopt collective and individual identification as ‘The Aborigines’. The Aboriginal subject now taken for granted is the originary figure (see Thiele 1991b, 2005a) found in the policies above, an absolute cultural quality that explains the whole of the individual. Since it is pure and immutable it cannot admit of multiplicity of identity and any deviation means diminution and loss (see Morgan 1994). This is an assimilatory logic according to which one is either Aboriginal in a totalising and exclusivist way or one is not.

These monolithic, dichotomous and heirarchised subject types endure in the citizen and Aboriginal subjects. Teachers are, as Nandy (1983: xi) described early missionaries, ‘well-meaning, hard-working middle-class ... liberals, modernists and believers in science, equality and progress’ engaged in a project of humanist enlightenment. They imagine a universal Western normality as the reference point against which everything is measured. That reference point implies full humanity, normalcy, Australianness, citizenship and inclusion as ‘us’, and against it, the ideal-typical Aboriginal subject is positioned in the mainstream classes and in some of the Aboriginalist curriculum, as not white, non-normal, inferior and liminally one of ‘us’. Many teachers, such as a Deputy Principal who believes that ‘they are not a very intelligent race’ (pers. comm., 25/3/02), retain images that are only partially erased in official discourse. As in the routine schooling above, Aboriginality is associated with primitivity, and categorised as deviant along with others such as insanity, homosexuality, illiteracy, and poverty, and seen to lack ‘the capacities to exercise their citizenship responsibly’ (Rose 1996b: 45).

Those relativities impose a basic desire for the normal. In postcolonial scholarship, the colonial debasement and dehumanisation of the native and the superior positioning of the white coloniser constituted oppositional subjects and a clearly hierarchised, pyramidal social structure in which social position hinged on the extent to which the subject approximated the white coloniser ideal. This hierarchy drove the colonised to prove their humanity according to skin colour but also the social attributes of level of education, type of employment and the like, since they promised social equality and inclusion. The colonised was thus driven to desire and ‘try to elevate himself to the white man’s level’ (Fanon 1986: 81). The Antillean Negro ‘will be proportionally whiter—that is, will come closer to being a real human being—in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language

[and] adoption of the mother country's cultural standards'; one 'is white as one is rich, as one is beautiful, as one is intelligent' (Fanon 1986: 18, 51-2).

This implies an internal hierarchy of subjects in which all groups compete to elevate themselves in the hierarchy to the position of the white coloniser. The colonisers incite the colonised to identify with and desire the coloniser's subject and to semi-abandon their own former self (Fanon 1986: 149). The move by Fanon's Antillean Negro to become 'all-but-white' (Fanon 1986: 180) by adopting the stereotypical characteristics of the coloniser—speaking 'French' French, gaining an education and working as a state official—was done at the expense of his former status. That is, in gaining the attributes of whiteness and so humanity, he removes himself from or elevates himself above his jungle status, he 'becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle' (1986: 18). Memmi (1965: xiv) and Nandy (1983: 52-3) saw similar hierarchies and drives to exceed the lower status of the colonised and/or the in-between.

A similar dichotomy and overarching societal hierarchy persists in Australia, in which the idealised normal citizen is homologous to the coloniser, promises social equality and inclusion and produces a general desire to achieve normalcy. Not only does this hierarchy exist, but it includes a similar differential between the 'full-blood' and 'half-caste' that pushes the latter to exceed the former and become normal. The latter have been regarded as a problem and threat to the racial and ethnic purity of the nation (Charlton 2000: 79), denigrated as racially and culturally inferior to the full blood (Paul 2000: 95) and seen as 'bloody nothings' (Herbert 1975) or wretched remnants, 'neither fish flesh nor good red herring' (Bulmer, cited in Attwood 1989: 120).

Contemporaneously, racially, culturally and subjectively hybrid Aboriginality is taken to be a sullied or broken down and less authentic Aboriginality. It is a corruption of, and forever inadequate to, the ideal and evidence of colonisation and assimilation. Cultural mixedness, such as is associated with being urban, educated and professional is taken to mean that individuals are by degrees less Aboriginal, less different and more normal, more 'White'. Individuals are thought to have lost, been alienated from or betrayed their Aboriginal selves, and so to be less whole. They are thought to be in between cultures and worlds, to belong fully

to neither and to be torn within themselves. The loss of culture and identity with oneself are understood to produce problems of self-esteem.

The situation in contemporary Australia is, under the influence of progressive liberal discourse then, highly complex. Aboriginality is no longer so negative, inferior or degraded. In the guise of the noble savage, both culture and subject are held in high regard and the relationship between the two idealised subject types is less unambiguously inferiorised. Many teachers hold romantic images of Aborigines and other 'primitives' as morally superior to the rapacious or soul-less white man. As the geography teacher said (22/4/02), primitives are environmentalists who 'live in harmony with the environment ... don't exploit it ... [and] don't tend to destroy it', and another (14/8/01) intimated when discussing an Aboriginal students' written work, their often unrefined writing style was evidence of their oral tradition.

This Aboriginality is invested with social value and imagined as desirable and so, insofar as it is taken as solidary and singular *vis-a-vis* the normal citizen, it inverts the social and civilisational hierarchy, without though, destabilising the binary difference between them. It does not displace normalcy as the social pinnacle but adds an alternative pinnacle, and the two coexist to complicate desire, as below.

A further complicating factor is that, as a categoric identity, Aboriginality is not solidary or unitary but includes a range of Aboriginalities, and is internally differentiated. The foundational Aboriginality, that of 'full-bloodedness', tradition and remoteness, continues to be regarded as more true to type, more authentic than others. Aborigines of mixed race who are fair skinned, urbanised, well-educated, professional and middle-class are perceived to be acculturated or assimilated and to lack the credentials of true Aboriginality. Authenticity in Tasmania is, according to this schema, measured by the extent to which a genetic and cultural connection with pre-contact Tasmanians can be established via recorded ancestry, appropriate embodiment, communality, traditional knowledge, language, social arrangements and/or lifestyle.

A second dimension of the rehabilitation of the Aborigine is that the half-caste has been rehabilitated. Though historically denigrated, half-castes (particularly women) could also be made fit for white spouses (McGregor 1997: 166-70), were

a safe way to 'breed out the black' and could be eliminated culturally (McGregor 2000: 62-4; Gray 2000: 71-7). As in colonial Victoria (Attwood 1989), at certain junctures they have been seen as superior to, and more readily civilisable and educable than, the tradition-oriented Aborigine (though also dangerous when educated; see Attwood 1989: 52). In recent times progressive liberalism has made the half-caste, at least rhetorically and potentially, and always problematically, equally Aboriginal. Aboriginality can be recovered.

These rarely consciously or fully formed understandings are evident in teachers' everyday behaviour and talk. To many teachers, Aboriginal Tasmanian students are 'not really' Aborigines (teacher comment, 30/8/01). They consider Sudanese refugee and fee-paying Chinese students legitimately different and worthy of special effort (teacher comments, 15/8/01, 19/3/02) to cater for their needs. They are prepared for instance, to adopt sensitive ways of correcting those students' written work or to consider their religious differences, but do not consider Aboriginal Tasmanians worthy of the same effort; they are regarded as being of this society and 'too hauntingly similar ... to warrant social entitlement' (Povinelli 2002: 13). Some teachers express this cynicism about the difference being claimed for Aboriginality by ostentatiously doing their marking and doing nothing to encourage their students to participate in discussion during the cultural awareness sessions run by the ASSPA teachers (30/8/01).

Some teachers though, notably but not only those who provide that training and manage the ASSPA program, assume that Aborigines have 'a biological essence' that has been disrupted, lost, or cannot find cultural expression (see Thiele 1991b: 180-82). This essence is held in nostalgic regard, as by the geography teacher (22/4/02):

I am talking of their primitive state. Remember that these are non-existent today or don't live like they used to. ... Eskimoes now live in pre-fab houses along the fishing line. They have forgotten how to build igloos. These are dying skills, which is rather sad.

In this view, modernisation, industrialisation and globalisation have meant loss through detraditionalisation, and such individuals may 'heal' and become whole again if they can be supported to recover community, culture and identity (teacher comment, 14/8/01; see *Aboriginal Studies Framework* n.d.: 9).

Thus, recuperated images overlay but do not purge Aboriginality of its negative aspects, and do not collapse the dichotomous and hierarchical positioning of the Aborigine relative to the citizen. The discourse of urban Aboriginality overlays that of remoteness, that of the modern overlays the traditional, and that of the active agent *in* its situation overlays that of the passive victim *of* its situation, rendering the continuing master binarism of those types and the normalising processes of routine schooling more opaque. The foundational bourgeois opposition of normal and deviant, and the similarly foundational colonialist opposition of white coloniser and native colonised subject types persist and perpetuate a hierarchised continuum of subjects, which progressive discourse only ambiguously destabilises. The oppositions construct parallel continua of subject types, one between the normal and the deviant and the other between the settler-Australian and the Aborigine. As was evident in the classroom interactions above, the normal is equated with whiteness, Australianness, middle-classness, studentness, full citizenship and inclusion as ‘us’, and the deviant includes the several unruly populations including the Aboriginal and less educated, and is equated with liminal citizenship and marginality as ‘them’.

When these ideal types, dichotomies and relativities are implicated in teacher talk and embedded in routine practice they produce two poles of attraction and repulsion: the included white normal and ‘less’ Aboriginal, and the marginally normal and included authentic Aborigine. Both have an attraction, and multifarious urgings, provocations, rewards and threats propel individuals toward the social equality and inclusion promised by approximating whiteness *and* the promise of the legitimate cultural difference and subjective wholeness of the authentic Aborigine. That is, progressive discourse provides Tasmanian Aborigines the opportunity to rise in the social and cultural hierarchy, even as such progress implies loss of authenticity; it also provides the ‘impossible object of an authentic self-identity’ (Povinelli 2002: 6) which none can achieve and against which all are always already inadequate.

Simultaneously then, liberal governmental discourse promotes contrary compulsions, while the commonsensical assimilatory logic that makes identification with the totalising ideal typical Aboriginality a zero sum game makes multiple identities contradictory and not possible. Aboriginal students’

exhibition of other identities such as normality, whiteness or citizenship in appearance, habits, aspirations or accomplishments is taken to imply compromised or lost Aboriginality.

This subjective positioning is like that of Antillean Negroes, who are French citizens in whom both black and white awkwardly co-exist. They live with ‘white compatriots’ and grow up ‘forever talking about “our ancestors, the Gauls”’. They do not think of themselves as black but as Antilleans and assume that the ‘Negro lives in Africa’ (Fanon 1986: 147, 148). Yet a blackness, incompleteness and secondariness is thrust upon them in their encounter with continental France (Fanon 1986: 149), and later rehabilitation of the Negro adds to their confusion, since they then ‘wanted to be typically Negro [and] to be white’, which was both ‘impossible’ and ‘a joke’ (1986: 132). They are in the end ‘not yet white, no longer wholly black [and] damned’ (1986: 138), condemned to live a life ruled by chimeras and ‘an ambiguity that is extraordinarily neurotic’ (1986: 192). Homi Bhabha (in Fanon 1986: x) describes this as a tenuous in-between position ‘fixed at the shifting boundaries between barbarism and civility’. Memmi (1965: 15, 119) sees the Tunisian Jews and colonised middle-class intellectuals, and Nandy (1983: 71-2) the figure of Kipling as inhabiting similarly anguishing almost non-positions.

Governing discourse-in-practice

The conceptual schema above grounds the liberal governmental subjection of Aborigines in Tasmanian schooling. Aboriginal students enter the school with many identifications, including those with their region, neighbourhood, previous school, gender, socio-economic status and sexuality, and they begin and continue through their school career to mix with other students on those and other bases. They take up sports and hobbies and consume soap operas, documentaries and reality shows. Most say that they are intent on enjoying being young and that their priorities include study and work, whether current part time or longer-term career. As adolescents, many of these identifications are provided by family, community, media and school, since they have as yet not decided whether or how strongly to adopt them, nor are they capable of mature agency in doing so. One girl (AS5,

4/10/01) reported for example, wishing she could deprive herself of her Catholicism, but feeling unable to do so.

Their Aboriginality is but one of these identifications and often, at this time of life at least, one of secondary importance. Many say that it is with them all the time but not as something which dominates or determines their lives. They say that it is held easily alongside their other identities, as if in reserve, though they expect that it may become more important at some later time in their lives. Many come to the school from outlying districts and have not known each other as Aborigines, some are similarly ignorant of each other as Aborigines even through prolonged high school and neighbourhood contact, and most do not form relationships on the basis of their Aboriginality. In fact, some explicitly refuse to do so on the basis of differences of social class.

A minority, mostly those from the core community who are immersed in discourses of difference, oppression and resistance, have begun to fix their identification and settle on a stable mix of identities dominated by their Aboriginality. The Aboriginality with which they identify is the ideal typical, notably ancestral links to pre-colonial Aborigines, cultural memories of a discrete communal past and a narrative of oppression and resistance.¹¹ This amalgam is often passionately and defensively held and these students mix more with those with whom they share the discourse. They also though, have multiple intersecting loyalties, and will not for instance participate in school or TAC programs without their white mates (comment by senior TAC employee, 19/3/02). In its contrary anti-whiteness, marginality and resistance their ideal-typical Aboriginality dictates their disengagement from education.

Irrespective of this plurality of self-identities and the heterogeneity within the category, all individuals are seen in the light of and treated according to the categoric Aboriginality and immersed in the discursive maelstrom above, which impresses upon them in diverse ways the subject positions of the authentic Aborigine and the model citizen and the notion that to be the one implies proportional renunciation of the other. That juxtapositioning and the imposition of a generalised conditional choice, effected through myriad insignificant, rarely repressive *petits récits* (Hollinshead 1998: 129) of normalisation, position

¹¹ These Aboriginal credentials are considered in more detail in Chapter Five.

Aboriginal students as archetypically Aboriginal and as normal citizen subjects, but the constitutive incompatibility they presume problematises individuals' actual multiple selfhoods.

All students are officially allocated to the categoric subject position that precedes them and subtly labelled without regard to their individually-unique identities. Perceived by education bureaucrats, administrators, teachers and students as cultural ciphers, they are assumed to have the characteristics and proclivities that social science has attached to the category. They are imagined to come from disadvantaged or troubled family backgrounds, expected to find regular attendance, appropriate behaviour and disciplined study habits a challenge (senior teacher comments, 19/3/02), to have a preference for the practical and a disinclination to the abstract (comments by senior teacher and Aboriginal Liaison Officer, 18/3/02), and to want time off around the mutton birding season (pers. comm., 30/9/04). Many are directed toward general or vocational subjects and expected to require delicate treatment and remedial support. Perceived as individuals at the same time, they are also assessed in terms of their current or potential normalcy, in terms of intellectual capacity, interest in education or other aspects of good citizenship. Conformity to normality, such as enrolment in pre-tertiary subjects, is suggestive of a qualification of their Aboriginality.

Each individual is formally allocated to a position on the continuum of alterity/normalcy, and informally categorised by teachers by reference to other accepted indicators of Aboriginality, including but not limited to known ancestry, family name and history (local or of the core community), embodiment, dress, behaviour, life style, associations, language use, cultural attributes ('corroboree dancing and stuff like that', AS5, 4/10/02) and family size or health status (teacher comment, 21/8/01). This judgement includes reference to negative colonialist Aboriginality and the reductive use of the homologous social disadvantage (as an indicator of Aboriginality and the legacy of dispossession). This classification occurs in everyday interactions and inflects the formal slot on the continuum of alterity. It is on these unofficial bases that many students, though officially Aboriginal, are not considered real Aborigines and insufficiently different from normal to warrant special treatment.

On the basis of the initial formal and subsequently repeated quixotic assessments, which cannot imagine students being both truly Aboriginal and normal, the school operationalises the imaginary and provides the conditions of possibility that press individuals to adopt the desired form of Aboriginal citizenship. It begins by allocating them to a place in mainstream or alternative schooling. Students whose Aboriginality is unofficially judged to be negligible are placed in mainstream classes and treated as others, that is, as teachers often say, 'according to individual need'. As in the aforementioned lessons, they are subject to routine normalisation processes which establish normative definitions of the good self-actualising and socially-responsive student, Australian citizen and civilised human. Those practices both constitute that subject as prime and by the operation of the binary incidentally construct the Aboriginal subject as the negative uncivilised Other of the normal.

On the basis of their formal categorisation as Aboriginal and in accord with programs, funding and accountability requirements, the same students also become the object of state interventions intended to improve the educational outcomes of the category. The school intervenes with 'programmes of empowerment' (Rose 1996b: 60) such as ASSPA and the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS), which provide remedial instruction and encourage engagement with standard education. They aim to help students achieve standard outcomes and provide them with more intense opportunity to become the ideal citizen-subject, and they also label each individual as a member of the category, inadequate to the ideal student, citizen and Australian, and in need of support to become so.

At the same time, they provide pastoral care, social well-being and cultural recovery. Teachers tend to assume that students who deliberately neither publicly identify as Aboriginal, claim credentialising knowledge of values and beliefs, nor associate with Aboriginal students simply on the basis of Aboriginal heritage, do so in response to social pressure to hide their Aboriginality ('not want[ing] to be singled out': teacher comment, 21/8/01) or that they have been alienated from their Aboriginality and are therefore suffering problems of self-esteem. They imagine such students to be 'having trouble coming to terms with', or 'still learning how to deal with their Aboriginality' (teacher comment, 16/8/01).

Teachers act on these perceptions by helping the student to recover, express and become more confident in their Aboriginality, in order to 'heal'.

One Aboriginal Education Worker (AEW) interpreted and responded to her daughter's stated priority to succeed in education in these terms. The AEW thought that this indicated that her Aboriginal identity had been taken from her by the state and wider society and that recovery of her Aboriginality would rebalance her unhealthy taste for education and associated derogation of her Aboriginality (pers. comm., 6/8/01). She and others who think the same are animated by the faith that originary culture and self can be recovered, and that, as a teacher (29/8/01) said, 'valuing the Aboriginal culture and history leads to these students furthering their education'. Teachers set about recovering that Aboriginality through the ASSPA program, by celebrating, nurturing and teaching it. They work to form a supportive cohort of Aboriginal students and to facilitate students' recovery and re-identification with cultural tradition in dance, art, stories and language. They encourage their students to become again the real Aborigines they once were and can again be. These efforts simultaneously valorise the ideal-typical Aboriginal binary distinctiveness and construct students' actual Aboriginal culture, identity and self as inadequate and less than real forms of Aboriginality.

Some students are, on the basis of an Aboriginality that the school accepts as authentic alterity, offered alternative arrangements designed to cater for their alterity and to minimise the normalising pressures of mainstream schooling. They are classified as different, separate, not normal citizens and, 'since they do not enrol, attend, participate or sit exams', not students (comment by former Deputy Principal, 16/4/02), and are allocated to the alternative education unit. In its practices, this unit almost reverses the priorities of the mainstream. It is situated at the edge of the campus, close to town so students can come and go without engaging with the school. It prioritises the idealised Aboriginal culture and identity; student's life circumstances, interests, identity and self-esteem as an Aborigine are more important than standard educational outcomes. Pedagogy responds to immediate student interest, which often centres on violent home life and prison experience. The teacher does little to manipulate such interest for pedagogical purposes, or to impose standard expectations in terms of literacy, completion or assessment requirements, since they will compromise students'

identity and alienate them from education. The Aboriginalising practices of the unit encourage students to identify then, with the idealised Aboriginality as a subject antithetical to, and more important than, the normal citizen.

The problematisation of the Aboriginal-citizen subject position

Students move within and between these different milieux, in mainstream pre-tertiary, general or vocational classes, ASSPA meetings and events and occasionally visiting the unit for specific classes, social contact or to see the teacher. Rarely, those based at the unit go to the mainstream section of the school, but they too are immersed in the same wider worlds of meaning outside school. The informal assessment of Aboriginal and normal bona fides is repeated as teachers observe the choices Aboriginal students make, intermittently consider their educational and personal progress, and adjust their assessment of the individual's performance of the ideal types. As a result, their positioning vacillates over time. Most will be a), treated as no different from others in routine normalising processes, b), provided with instruction in Aboriginality and support to recover the Aboriginal culture and identity they are thought to lack, which c) therefore acknowledges and provides inducements for them to enhance their credentials as the unitarily different, victim-but-resistant-to-assimilation type, while d), having their actual multiple hybrid Aboriginal subjectivities made difficult.

These dynamics constitute both the normal citizen and the Aborigine as desirable, but not complementary possibilities, in fact conditional alternatives. The juxtaposed interventions problematise the possibility of them maintaining their current or achieving a new reconciliation of their mixed Aboriginal and Tasmanian/Australian selves via a non-essentialist model of self and seduce/coerce most students into the former. Because their Aboriginal and the modern plural citizen selves are made incompatible, it is difficult for them to be both. If not 'impossible', it is, as Fanon and du Bois found for black intellectuals (Posnock 1997), difficult to be a successful Aboriginal student when resistance to education connotes (for students and teachers alike) Aboriginal authenticity and when engagement in education is apparently antithetical to authentic Aboriginality.

The disparate discursive practices diminish as less authentic those Aboriginalities which manage to resolve the dissonances between normality and Aboriginality by integrating their subjective Aboriginal-normal plurality. Many students evidently move easily between several identifications, such as, according to one (AS7, 27/9/01), the prefects from her former school, mallies, drug users, work mates and her Aboriginal family. Another student (AS5, 27/3/02) suggested a non-essentialist Aboriginality when she said that her Aboriginal and student identities 'are both important to me actually'. Since relative importance depends on situation and is therefore fluid, both are maintained without fixed hierarchy. But such a multiple and hybrid subject position is constituted as inauthentically Aboriginal.

That is, the Aboriginal student who maintains multiple self-identities, such as the participatory citizen, compromises his or her Aboriginal authenticity. Unlike the acknowledgement granted the members of the core community in the unit, and despite the curriculum rhetoric that has sought to recuperate the Aborigine as modern, schools and teachers mostly acknowledge the Aboriginality of those they have positioned toward the 'normal citizen' end of the continuum as lost souls. Together with the students in the unit, they look with suspicion at their claims to Aboriginality. They interpret their evident hybrid Aboriginalities as either primarily a matter of socio-economic disadvantage (to which they respond with standard remediation) or as evidence of them being assimilated and having lost their Aboriginality (which they then set about recovering).

These contradictory subjecting practices are predicated on the essentialist ideal-typical Aboriginality and they diminish the hybrid subjectivity achieved by many Aboriginal students, constructing it as inadequate to either of the ideals, and an in-between, not quite-Aboriginal, not quite-normal position, from whence to become either normal or Aboriginal. Though many students have developed an Aboriginal selfhood in which they *are* both Aboriginal and citizen, the discursive positioning troubles the legitimacy of their Aboriginality. They disqualify the legitimacy of their own Aboriginality by saying 'I've got no ties to the actual Aboriginal community' (AS7, 27/9/01), 'I wouldn't say feel [Aboriginal], just know [as a fact of biography]' (AS16, 13/5/02), 'They're kind of my relatives, ancestors I guess' (AS4, 4/10/01), or 'Oh, but I'm not full-blood!' (AS2, comment

in class, 31/8/01). They describe themselves as ‘theoretically Aboriginal’ (pers. comm., 23/5/04) or ‘not a real Aborigine’ (AS11, 7/11/01), and add riders to their Aboriginality such as ‘I don’t practice any of the culture’ (AS2 6/9/01), ‘I’m not part of the community or anything like that’ (AS16, 13/5/02), ‘I don’t do any of the cultural activities’ (AS5, 4/10/01) and ‘I don’t think about it that much’ (AS7, 27/9/01).

Aboriginal students are governed by the structural parameters erected by these discourses-in-practice. The practices de-legitimise individuals’ transcendence of the exclusivist choice via hybrid identities and press them to approximate one of the mutually exclusive subjective options, to choose to be *either* an authentic unitary Aborigine *or* an ordinary citizen. The discourses-in-practice make the options conditional: the former promises recognition of alterity and compensatory mechanisms at the cost of marginalisation; the latter promises social inclusion and equality through an apparent compromise of Aboriginality. The first option is, through the attached conditions, not practically viable, and makes the second the more likely. This is to manage difference as Bhabha (1990b: 208, original emphases) says, by demanding that it be within the bounds of the normal:

There are two problems with [multicultural education policy]: one is ... that although there is always an entertainment and encouragement of cultural diversity, there is always a corresponding containment of it. A transparent norm is constituted, a norm given by the host society or dominant culture, which says that “these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid”. This is what I mean by a *creation* of cultural diversity and a *containment* of cultural difference.

The Aboriginality that attracts most overt governmental validation is that in which the ideal typical credentials are apparently substantiated, such as those of the students in the unit. Unfortunately then, because it implies marginalisation, these students who are committed to being ‘real’ Aborigines must be evidently archetypical, because their credentials are diminished if other subject positions—such as middle-classness, studentship or participatory citizenship—exist to compromise their ideal Aboriginality. Thus, proving their unassimilated authenticity requires that they resist education. In fact, such auto-marginalisation

can become, as for Willis's (1977) working class boys, a badge of honour securing their cultural bona fides. The option of being a real Aborigine means that they must be less than fully participatory and, recalling their white mateships, this implies psychic sublimation, performative eschewal, moderation and obfuscation of actual multiplicity as well as some measure of social inequality and exclusion. These onerous conditions make the authentic Aborigine a difficult subject option.

The second option canvassed by liberal governmentality is the possibility of inclusion as normal citizens. Also predicated on the assimilatory logic of authenticity, this option requires that social inclusion be conditional on the modification, moderation or other self-regulation of certain dimensions of difference that contradict the normal. Thus for instance, the norm of rational resolution of disagreement prevails over what some Aboriginal parents, students and AEWs, and some teachers, euphemistically think of as an Aboriginal way of more emotional, honest, direct and real-world resolution, and results in a high proportion of Aboriginal students being subject to school discipline. Similarly, abstract knowledge prevails over more practical knowledge that is thought of as an Aboriginal strength/preference. In these instances, as in general, the option of incorporating Aboriginal difference within an overarching citizen subject identity is the option preferred by liberal governing interests.

The assimilatory logic also makes this option problematic. That logic interprets cultural change as cultural loss and the demand for self-regulation as prioritising citizenship and subsuming difference, and so means that such decisions are damaging to cultural and personal integrity. Thus, the option of citizenship comes, within the terms of progressivist and Aboriginalist discourse, to imply the subjugation, sublimation or suppression of Aboriginality, as if of secondary importance. The abiding assumptions of culture and identity in schools mean that the option of social inclusion is conditional on the adoption of a diminished or more qualified Aboriginal subject position. But this is a false opposition and condition, built on the naive ideal type which has it for instance, that Aborigines are innately more concrete learners and that physical conflict resolution is evidence of authenticity.

This second option for resolving the discursively-constructed Aboriginal-citizen problematic is proposed through the normalising *petits récits* as the more

rational possibility. Teachers and students look favourably upon Aboriginal students who adopt this course, describing them (in one student report) as ‘a pleasure to have in the class’, and less favourably on those abrasive students who assert their Aboriginality at every turn. They celebrate the good-humoured Aboriginal student who, like Fanon’s smiling Negro (see 1986: 72), is easily acknowledged as being Aboriginal, even if it is by not conforming to the ideal. In school reports, teachers celebrate those who take the preferred option, the flexible Aborigine, the one who keeps their Aboriginality private and gets on with life.

Since liberal governance seeks to govern ‘through the regulated choices of individual citizens’, and constitutes them as ‘subjects of choices and aspirations to self-actualisation and self-fulfilment’ (Rose 1996b: 41) capable of responsible action, this is the end point of governing intervention in the formation of citizens. Having established the terms and conditions, the school leaves individuals to make their own decisions about how they identify, as a matter of freedom of expression. There is little further constraint or support for minority groups or individuals, and managing the social pressures which impact upon them is regarded as the individual’s responsibility. He or she must resolve the calculus involved in this choice between normalisation inclusion and difference / marginalisation.

Schools provide support for certain groups of students but the base position is that identity is a private and individual matter. Staff are largely ignorant of the normalising and Aboriginalising processes that they prosecute, and resist the suggestion that school culture or social pressure directed at those on the margins be considered. A senior Departmental officer with responsibility for equity issues admitted (5/10/01) that the education system as a whole ‘does not have the language for that yet’. Aboriginality is treated on a ‘need to know basis’ and as a private matter, and managing to be Aboriginal is a matter of personal intelligence:

As a race I don’t think they’re very intelligent; you know, on the bell curve. ... They’re lazy. They call it the white world, I just call it the world. We’ve all got to live in it. The intelligent ones succeed if they want to (Deputy Principal with responsibility for Aboriginal students, 25/3/02).

Consequently, the essentialising, dichotomising and normalising pressures continue to press the choices above. Students respond to the conditioning processes in individually novel ways. For those imbued with the essentialist discourse, for whom the subjective binarism is unquestioned, the normal implies the denigration and exclusion of their Aboriginal selfhood. For them, the educational 'abstract' and 'practical' constitute real poles of difference and the adoption of one means the loss of the other. The second option implies to them the disappearance of Aboriginality within the normal and the loss of cultural particularity and selfhood, and so they adopt the first option and accept the marginalisation it imposes. For some, the identification with the normal world and the need for inclusion push them to adopt the second option and accept its conditions, if temporarily. For others, the normal may prevail in one sphere and not others, or prevail alongside alternatives, and they negotiate the fluidities without entanglement in the binds of totalising difference and exclusive choice.

Conclusion

This then, is the liberal governmental attempt to establish social solidarity, security, peace and prosperity (Rose 1996b: 40) through having Aborigines constitute themselves as self-governing Aboriginal-citizens. The attempt channels desires into two authorised ways of being and manipulates the conditions such that either option provides governing certainty, though for reasons of state one is preferable. The 'real' Aborigine is marginal, dependant and therefore predictable and governable. The self-governed Aborigine theoretically contains imagined unruliness and produces regularised behaviour, but does so imperfectly, and the actual outcome is less the sought-after civil surety than a problematisation of lived ambiguity.

All students identify with the ideal typical Aboriginal culture and subject, but also with their own families, local communities, other social worlds, moral and social norms, sensibilities and aspirations. As components of their multiple, hybrid and mobile identities, both of the major subject positions are contingently important to them and they have developed workable reconciliations of the differences between them. Many from the core community have 'reconciled' the

differences by adopting the first option and accepting the marginalisation¹² that goes with it as further evidence of their Aboriginality. Most others have achieved reconciliations which avoid a disabling sense of cultural transgression.

All are nevertheless subject to the governing discourses-in-practice which make both core subject positions desirable yet dissonant and thereby push/pull them to take up one or the other. Though the dynamics trouble their personal reconciliations, most students do not simply take up the second option, because the many discourses intersect and interact in ways productive of proliferating contradictory meanings and subjective complexity. Students are subjected as normal Australians and as the exotic, problematic, victim and/or lost soul Aboriginal Other, formally granted and informally denied Aboriginal legitimacy. They are subject to other governing discourses in schooling and, as their interviews and the research literature (see for example Bhabha 1990a: 4; Walkerdine in Grundy 1994) suggest, others in Aboriginal, state, national and global communities.

Thus the governing project is incomplete. This chapter has not examined the full extent of individual liberty which Foucault (1979a; 1982) thought central to the practical ends of government. It has examined an early stage of a life-long process and focused on adolescents, whose capacity for negotiation is less than that of mature adults. It has though, noted the dynamics of 'the unit' which indicate that Aboriginal counter discourse may exaggerate the dichotomisation and hierarchisation of the ideal type, and with that the contrary pressures implicated in the problematisation of students' initial easy multiplicity. Succeeding chapters explore the agency of the structurally disempowered objects of governance and their contribution to the perpetuation and/or transformation of the conditions of their own subjection.

¹² Subsequent chapters argue that this marginalisation is in part a fabrication for political ends.

Chapter 5 Aboriginal governing subjection

Introduction

Chapter Four revealed how progressive governance influences Aboriginal students to become particular subjects through constructing a conditional choice between a marginalising ‘authentic’ Aboriginality and an inclusive but supposedly minimally Aboriginal normality. It outlined the building of the choice on the impossibility of authentic Aboriginality, the denigration of hybridity as a lesser form of Aboriginality and the overlay of a discursive reality on a contradictory lived reality. The choice positions Aboriginal Tasmanians in an ‘interstitial’ or ‘in-between’ space, pushing them ‘hither and thither’ (Bhabha 1994: 1) and in Anderson’s (1997: 8) estimation proposing that, as ‘hybrids’, they can best ‘resolve the paradox of [their] existence by transforming [themselves or being] ... transformed one way: white’.

Chapter Five explores the approach taken by the Aboriginal Tasmanian political elite to the conditions and opportunities opened up by that governance, which is to discursively imagine into being a solidary Aboriginal culture, distinct community and unitary Aboriginal self and propose that the Tasmanians may resolve their apparent paradox by transforming themselves one way: ‘black’. The politics embellishes the progressive pre-colonial aborigine¹ and colonial victim. Through numerous avenues, including incorporation of the cultural credentials of authentic mainland and global indigenous people, it invents tradition.² It elides the mixedness of the colonial-era forebears who founded the contemporary communities³ and constitutes them as originary Aborigines. It produces a mythic

¹ I use the lower case ‘aboriginal’ to indicate pre-colonial societies. This distinguishes them from contemporary Aborigines or Aboriginal communities (see Attwood 1989).

² The politically-inspired invention of tradition is a widespread if not universal process (see for example, Keesing and Tonkinson 1982; Handler and Linnekin 1984; Jolly and Thomas 1992; Sissons 1993), and the argument in this and the following chapter is not that the resulting culture is less real than a notional ‘naturally-occurring’ culture, but that, though it may have political advantages, it is sectional and has counter-productive consequences for many people caught in its dynamic. As Gilroy (1993a: 150) says, to say that culture is ‘socially constructed’ does not mean that it is ‘insubstantial, secondary or trivial’. This is part of a larger argument that, given that it responds to conditions emanating from progressive governance, transcendence of the problematic Aboriginality it is producing depends on changing those governing conditions and pursuing the difficult task of building a non-essentialist notion of Aboriginality.

³ See Prefatory Notes, p. v.

or ideal-typical Aboriginal culture, community and subject which are, though new, categoric and generic, apparently primordial, singular and particular.

This collective and individual subject grounds emancipatory and nation-building political goals. The politics is emancipatory in its concern to free Aborigines from the alleged shackles of white Australia to be once again sovereign Aborigines (see Aboriginal Provisional Government (APG) 1992; Mansell 1993). It is nation-building in its attempt to establish the core community *plus*⁴ as the Aboriginal Tasmanians. In the conditions provided by progressive governance, the mythic Aboriginality provides leverage indispensable to those goals and so the Aboriginal constituency must be enrolled in its performance.

The comprehensive performance of the mythic Aboriginality is politically effective. However, it repeats the binary opposition that makes problematic the compound Aboriginal-citizen subjectivities that all Aboriginal Tasmanians form in their everyday interaction with the settler-Australian and wider global worlds. The politics then, reinforces the difficulty of being complex Aboriginal citizens. The performance of the mythic Aboriginality contradicts individuals' lived Aboriginalities, and the contradiction leads the politics to obfuscation of the mythicism of the culture, community and self and of every individual's actual departure from it. This obfuscation drives the politics to a coercive version of the liberal state's governing subjection that exaggerates the 'hither and thither' initiated by the latter. The chapter outlines these processes in schooling and other public policy spheres.

Identity politics in schooling

The attitudes and behaviours of students in the alternative education unit in the previous chapter are in part the product of Aboriginal politics that denigrates formal education as an irrelevant, overly abstract, disciplinary, culturally-inappropriate and assimilatory experience. The political discourse asserts that schooling is a 'white' institution that alienates Aboriginal students from their culture, identity and self-esteem, and so fails to engage and provide them with the opportunity to gain equal outcomes. This discourse is evident in the interventions

⁴ See Prefatory Notes, p. v.

of the most influential representative of the political elite, Michael Mansell, who in March 2003 was quoted in the local newspaper⁵ as saying:

The Tasmanian education system fails Aboriginal children because it is a white system designed to meet the education needs of European children. It's no wonder Aboriginal children feel alienated. The sole cause of poor retention rates is the pitiful state of the curriculum and isolation each Aboriginal student feels within the classroom. Schools are meant to be an opportunity for children to develop. For most of our children, school attendance is dreaded.

In a letter to the editor the following year⁶ he said:

There is a crisis in Aboriginal education in Tasmania. Too few of our children complete high school, and hardly any go beyond that. Of those going through school, many can barely read and write. Where are our Aboriginal university graduates? In Tasmanian schools Aboriginal children learn about all things white—language, history, politics—but little or nothing of their own people. A few books published 20 years ago, are more or less all that teachers are given to educate about Aboriginal people. The absence of a significant Aboriginal component in education is a turn-off for black kids, and a deterrent from wanting to go to school ... Blind Freddy can see that education has failed to meet the needs of Aborigines. The Minister [for Education] cannot. We are at a total loss what to do.

These statements express the political claim that Aboriginal students have 'distinct needs and issues'⁷ and that the education system fails Aboriginal students because it does not cater for them. Another prominent activist expressed this position when he wrote that 'Aboriginal students want knowledge that provides a strengthening of Aboriginality and development themes for the future. Aboriginal education that does not contribute to the Struggle must ultimately contribute to the oppression'.⁸ This is consistent with national discourse, which has 'advanc[ed] the

⁵ *The Mercury*, 20/3/03: 21.

⁶ *The Mercury*, 25/10/04: 15.

⁷ *The Mercury*, 20/3/2003: 21.

⁸ This signed note was pinned to a notice board in Riawunna, the University's centre for Aboriginal Studies.

notion of Aboriginal Learning Styles and call[ed] for an Aboriginal Pedagogy for all Aboriginal people in Australia' (Hughes *et al.* 2004: 10).

Yet as Chapter Four indicates, that system has responded comprehensively to such calls, and the Aboriginal politics itself compromises Aboriginal students' engagement with, and chance of achieving success from schooling, as an event during the 2003 NAIDOC Week⁹ celebrations under the theme of 'Our children, our future' demonstrates. When addressing a gathering at Riawunna, the University of Tasmania's Aboriginal Studies centre, at which a number of Aboriginal school and university students were present, one prominent member of the core community, Jim Everett, said that education has a 'deliberate assimilationist agenda' and, while bemoaning the lack of university graduates, both he and Mansell described the university and Riawunna as 'part of the problem'. Mansell's message¹⁰ to the Hobart City Council NAIDOC launch that year was to the effect that:

[e]ducation is [a] problem. We have no say in what our children are taught at schools. White people decide that ... Education represents opportunity to white children, but failure to Aborigines'.

This is the dominant political discourse, pitting culture against education, in which Aboriginal students' educational success is of peripheral concern other than as corroborating evidence of the disjuncture of education and Aboriginality. The discourse manipulates the binary difference from 'them' the white oppressor to construct 'we' the Aboriginal victim. It disposes many students to think that Aboriginality inheres in practical interests, bush skills, connection to kin, particular learning styles and emotional straightforwardness, and to believe that schooling intentionally frustrates those apparently distinctive interests, strengths and needs. Though this is surely not the sole cause, many Aboriginal students come to see school in alienated terms such as the Aboriginal student's written description of school (27/3/02) over the page.

⁹ This refers to the annual national celebration of indigenous culture initiated by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Day of Observance Committee.

¹⁰ See *Pakana News* 53 (2): 24.

- Just sit there and fuckin' listen. NOT FUN
- Go to class with smart cunts and feel dumb so the teachers single you out and don't help enough cause there's too many People and not enough time.
- Teachers are too old fashioned and don't encourage enough
- Incentives not detentions.
- couldn't keep up so what's the fuck
- Give up too easy cause its boring
- Atmosphere sux
- Too afraid of us
- If we aren't above average we get shut out.
- Incentives. Can't just sit in room and say ra ra ra.

The essentialist oppressed Aboriginality contributes to many expressing their Aboriginality by attending irregularly or slipping away from class upon demand for intellectual or behavioural discipline. This is in part a product of the political machinations that are focused less on the achievement of improved educational outcomes than on gaining political leverage through marginalised difference. Thus, poor educational outcomes are exaggerated and may even be welcomed and provoked in pursuit of political ends. This is the import of the admission by influential Aboriginal educator, Professor Paul Hughes (Hughes *et al.* 2004: 9-10), that the agitation surrounding Aboriginal education nationally has been mounted 'for purely political motives':

For years we had been arguing that we as Aboriginal people could take control ourselves and do things the 'Aboriginal way'. However when others said "OK, what is the 'Aboriginal way'?" we could not come up with any statements that could help. I am the first to admit that there is no one 'Aboriginal way' but it was necessary for us to develop some useful 'Aboriginal way' statements that we could use politically.

Despite this admission, the same assertions continue (see Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC) 2008). This politics is then, part of the dialectic that establishes the conditions in schooling. It naturalises an extension of the progressive Aboriginality as the basis of claim to state concessions. It

motivates individuals' observance of a set of normative behaviours in order that such claims may be taken as natural, and can make that which is politically productive individually counter-productive.

Inventing the Aboriginal Tasmanian culture, community and self

While Aboriginal politics is invested in the mythic Aboriginality, Aboriginal adults are integrated in the life of the wider society and live socially, culturally and subjectively heterogeneous Aboriginalities. Their participation in face-to-face social interaction in family, neighbourhood, school, work and play, as well as mediated interaction, produces an 'infinite array of intercultural experiences' (see Langton 1993: 33-5). They live, identify with and form their selves in intimate everyday contact with people (including kin) who do not identify as Aborigines, and they constantly move between only notionally distinct Aboriginal and other worlds of meaning. As the politics makes evident, they internalise in the interaction liberal humanist notions of the foundational sovereign self, modernist nostalgia for lost origins (see Spivak 1988: 291) and progressive notions of Aboriginal culture and self. Their 'native' familiarity with the beliefs, anxieties and desires of the West, and capacity to manipulate them, is evidence of the intimacy of the relationship.

The relationship is a consequence of the colonial encounter and the antagonism, resistance, complicity and desire (see Fanon 1967; Said 1993; Bhabha 1994; Spivak 1996) involved in living interdependent lives over the ensuing period. It does not mean that Aboriginal Tasmanians are less Aboriginal but does mean that there is little cultural substance or social or political structure from the aboriginal past to be rehabilitated, that the Aboriginality proclaimed is not an exclusively Aboriginal entity and that contemporary individuals would be uncomfortable strangers in pre-colonial aboriginal or colonial Aboriginal company. It means that the three foundational communities and different individuals are highly internally heterogeneous.

It is this particular mix, not absolute difference, that constitutes Aboriginal Tasmanian cultural distinctiveness (see Hall 1990). Constructed in intra-, inter- and extra-communal interaction, Tasmanian Aboriginalities are so radically interpenetrated with white and other subjects that, other than discursively, they are

not 'One nor the Other but *something else besides*' (Bhabha 1994: 219; see also 102-22), not one of two poles, caught between or straddling two worlds, cultures or identities. Indeed, the interpenetration is built on a foundationally mixed Aboriginal past. The founding generations of the three communities descended from the women of the north-east,¹¹ were all of mixed race¹² and enunciated from their 'liminal' or 'interstitial' positioning (to use Bhabha's terms) a social, cultural, and religious reconciliation of their Aboriginal and other traditions and histories. Agentic negotiation began at Wybalenna (Birmingham 1992a, 1992b) and continued with the Bass Strait Islanders' integration in the wider economy, as a group of the male heads of the leading families (cited in TAC/ALCT 2004: 9-10 said in a letter to the Launceston *Examiner* of May 1883:

We work as hard for our bread as any man. Admitted that our working season is of short duration, but while it lasts we work hard and for long hours, otherwise the price we get for our produce would never pay. Whenever we can get remunerative employment we are only too glad to avail ourselves of the opportunity to earn a pound.

They and other Aboriginal Tasmanians also fought in both world wars (Felton 1991: 23, 33).

Yet since the 1970s the politics has been dedicated to the creative imagining-into-being of the thus far 'firm ground' (Spivak 1996: 211) provided by a mythological schema (Barthes 2000) of Aboriginality. The politics has sought, following multicultural policy, to establish an 'incommensurably' different culture (Bhabha 1990b: 208-09) and a unified revolutionary native self (Fanon 1967) as the innocent victim of colonial dispossession and on-going institutional discrimination. As Kevin Gilbert (1977: 1) saw of Aborigines nationally, in Tasmania they 'embrace and propagate ... about themselves' the notions that they 'share freely; ... have a strong feeling of community; ... don't care about money and lack the materialism of white society; ... care more deeply for their children than do white parents; and so on'.

The politics constitutes and naturalises an Aboriginal 'stubborn chunk' (Bhabha 1994: 219), and demands as of right the liberation of the Aboriginal self

¹¹ *Pakana News* 52, August 2002.

¹² See Ryan 1996: 222-38.

from state domination into an edenic sovereign present that is identical to an imagined past. The political interest is to ‘loosen the repressive locks’ of unidirectional domination by a monolithic ‘them’ ‘so that [Aboriginal] man can be reconciled with himself, once again find his nature or renew contact with his roots and restore a full and positive relationship with himself’ (see Foucault 1987: 2).

For anti-colonial activists and theorists of postcoloniality, such essentialist strategy is a legitimate response to the colonial dislocation, in that it provides the necessary break with the colonial past and the solid ground on which to recover a culture, society and consciousness. Spivak (1996: 214-15, original emphasis) for example, has praised historians of the Indian subaltern for their ‘*strategic* use of positivistic essentialism’. Aboriginal Tasmanian political agitation has used the strategy to renounce the creative reconciliation achieved by their forebears and ‘recover’ a monolithic Aboriginal selfhood. The strategy has been critical in gaining the political achievements of the last thirty years, including state recognition, acknowledgement of dispossession, return of lands, apology for the removal of children, provision of more ‘culturally-appropriate’ services, control of cultural heritage¹³ and a measure of self-determination. It has however, been retained since the emergence of a less coercive progressive state, the growing influence of wider national and global circumstances, the Aboriginal constituency’s voluntary integration and the relative failure of reforms to produce continuing improvements in socio-economic circumstances.

As a result, the politics has become deeply obfuscatory. While the overt goals include the liberty to be truly Aboriginal and equal as citizens, covertly the political elite have established a ‘complicitous [or] folded together’ (Spivak 1999: 361) political relationship with the state in which the core *plus* is recognised as the authentic Aboriginal community and the TAC the pre-eminent authority. The mythic Aboriginality grounds the strategy, as in the following statement by Mansell (1989: 50-1):

Are we Aboriginal Australians or are we in fact Australian Aborigines? The former suggests that our lot is chucked in with the lot of Australians. We are Australian citizens, albeit we happen to be Aboriginal, therefore our rights are determined by the rights which

¹³ See notes 2, 3, 4 and 5 in the introductory chapter of this thesis.

accrue to Australians except for some special consideration because we happen to be Aboriginal. However, if we are Australian Aborigines, the emphasis is upon us being Aboriginal people who happen to live in this country called Australia and our indigenous rights flow from that separate and different description of us. A whole range of political considerations also flow from [it]. ... Are we Aboriginal Australians? If we are, then our whole aim is to get the best deal we can for our people within the Australian society. But if we are Australian Aborigines, we are aiming to get the best possible deal from the world, which includes the nation of Australia, to which we are not subordinate.

That Aboriginality must be considered sufficiently credible for the state to accede to claims in its name and so the core constituency must be mobilised. The chimeras of a 'free' and politically sovereign Aboriginality and an oppressive state are used to raise consciousness, incite desire and energise the movement. The politics fabricates the mythic Aboriginality by co-opting multiple cultures and pasts and re-packaging them as Tasmanian. It legitimates the goal of liberation by constituting the state as repressive and Aborigines as its victims. But the tensions inherent in this politics demand further work. Since the Aboriginality must be essential, dehistoricised and natural, its constructedness must be obscured. Since the subject must be unitary, any discrepancies between it and the actuality of decentredness and multiplicity must also be obscured. And since the Aboriginality is oppositional, so the elite must hide its real relationship with the state behind oppositional rhetoric.

Thus the politics comes to be more dedicated to the achievement of a stable Aboriginal-state relationship, and through its dependence on the performance of the mythic Aboriginality, less to individual emancipation, in fact largely insofar as it works as a motivator. Actual progress towards that emancipation, in the form of educational success, social equality or material well-being is problematic since it compromises the appearance of the passive victim. In Tasmania this means for example, that the politics is invested in representing schooling as inappropriate and repressive and in equating interest and success in schooling with whiteness. It takes resistance and failure in schooling as evidence of real Aboriginality, and

success as evidence of a dubious Aboriginality. That is, it invests in a failure, recalcitrance and unruliness that is useful in political bargaining but contrary to individuals' capacity to achieve social equality.

This form of subaltern agency, which neither undermines colonialist dominance nor liberates lived heterogeneity (and in fact contains it for political purposes), is not unique to Tasmania. Mervyn Gibson (Gibson and Pearson 1987) describes a parallel situation in Hope Vale, where the drinkers mobilise a mythic Aboriginal culture and tradition to exploit other sectors of the community in its own particular interests. They make drinking 'an expression of *identity* and *culture* ... to drink alcohol is to *be* an Aborigine' and associate '[h]ealth, hygiene and care about nutrition and economic welfare ... with a white identity. There is this assumption amongst Aborigines that achievement and social responsibility is the preserve of white people' (Gibson and Pearson 1987: 2, 4-5, original emphases). The mobilisation of kinship ties and cultural obligations pushes individuals to accede to the drinking to the detriment of their own family's health and education. Those who reject the appeal to culture are compromised on the basis of their diminished Aboriginality.

Aboriginal Tasmanians are embedded in this myth. It is possible, as Foucault (1979a: 36-49) might suggest, that the Aboriginal elite has been seduced by liberal power into comporting itself appropriately, and that they are naively caught in the 'miraculating' liberatory cause (see Spivak 1989: 131). The evidence presented below suggests though, that they lead the politics in some measure cynically in regard to its human costs. The vigour with which it has been pursued by the same leaders for many years, in the absence of formal social or cultural repression, suggests this interpretation. Many other Aborigines routinely fear that their communal integrity, cultural particularity and self identity are under threat. Memories of earlier denial, repression and discrimination and their own less than edifying responses, linger and dominate their lives, as one Bass Strait Island man (AA4, 16/8/02) revealed:

You have got no idea of what we've had to let go of and the shame that we felt growing up, and then trying to recover that, and live with our shame because we can't apologise to [relatives who we avoided on the street] ... It's a very difficult thing to work through, because almost

half your life you're ashamed of who you are, and your family, all your relatives and all your bloody friends. A majority of the Aboriginal community will live and die with big grudges ... chips on their shoulders.

In the publication *We Who Are Not Here* (Friend 1992), members of the Fanny Cochrane-Smith (FC-S) community express their near-invisibility. Many people mourn the loss of cultural particularity and cohesive and secure communal lives (see Felton 1991; Direen 1994). They feel that in living and working in the cities they are inexorably divorced from their culture. In the context of earlier social pressure which made it 'not safe' to express their Aboriginality the man above for example, 'always wanted to be more Aboriginal':

I wasn't going mutton-birding any more, I wasn't doing any of the things we did growing up, all that was gone, so it was just a name tag. I wanted more, but "How would you become more Aboriginal?" Do you get fatter? See, I didn't know. But I desperately needed it, I wanted something which was invisible. I couldn't see it but I needed it. I was seeking it but didn't know where to look.

These fears and desires are in part the product of the history of denial suffered at the hands of colonial and later governments, but also of the political strategy that pushes those of the core community *plus* to exceed what they are and become 'more Aboriginal' Aborigines. That strategy is to create, on the basis of vestiges, new and more Aboriginal traditions with which to develop a sense of continuous connection, an epic past for which to feel responsible and a heightened grievance against settler-Australia and its institutions as a focus of identity formation. While each of these imaginings has some basis in reality, each is made hyper-real for political effect.

Boundary work

Official categorisation formalises social, cultural and political boundaries between Aboriginal and other Tasmanians that may otherwise remain nebulous. The spinning of particular Aboriginal 'webs of significance' (Geertz 1973: 5) by the

politics begins by exploiting¹⁴ the possibilities opened up by that categorisation. The politics adopts the positive stereotypes of the liberal ideal type, such as those which grant Aborigines an attractively stable, integrated, non-conflictual and supportive kinship-based pre-colonial order. It adopts national representations of Aborigines as ‘the true owners of Australia, innate conservationists, highly spiritual and peace loving, group and consensus oriented [and as having] ... a special relationship with the land’ (Thiele 1991b: 180). It uses the positive imagery to reverse some aspects of the colonial hierarchy, adopting and transforming stereotypes that have previously ‘spoiled’ (Goffman 1968a) Aboriginality. Instead of being close to nature as primitive savages, Aborigines become “‘the most highly civilized’” (Thiele 1991b: 181) spiritual beings, instead of small-scale traditional community being claustrophobic it becomes richly rewarding and mutually-supportive, and instead of being child-like and limiting, Aboriginal learning styles are whole and affective.

This reversal is accomplished in part by a negative stereotyping of whiteness. The encompassing society is represented as dominated by capitalist greed, private ownership, partial relationships, loneliness and egoistic anomie. White settlers ‘stole the land they now occupy; ... are guilty of colonial domination and are responsible for its consequences; and they are inherently individualistic, barbaric and coldly rational’ (Thiele 1991b: 180). They were depraved sexual predators without ‘spiritual and cultural links to the land’ (Lehman 1990: 8-9). The politics exaggerates the stigma with which Aborigines have been marked. The white world—the word ‘white’ often being used as ‘a moment of compressed and magically adequate expression’ (Spivak 1989: 124) which captures all these meanings—discriminates against, subjugates and marginalises, and is responsible for Aboriginal alienation and dysfunction. White antagonism means that, for example, ‘[w]e are the only race of people that I know of on earth, the Tasmanian Aborigines, who have to daily justify our existence’ (Mansell cited in Ryan 1996: 260, note 2).

Two cases illustrate this boundary work. One, a cultural safety program (UTas 2004), was delivered by members of the core community to university academic

¹⁴ This is not to suggest a linear relationship between state categorisation and Aboriginal myth-making. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander political activism to achieve citizenship and minority rights contributed to the development of the category.

and general staff. The other, a piece of policy research (Jacobs and Walter, n.d.), was conducted in part by an Aboriginal Tasmanian researcher. Both were supported by mainstream institutions¹⁵ and participants in the program were told that it was ‘approved by local Aboriginal people’ (fieldnotes 4/11/2004). Both were attempts, predicated on social justice and affirmative action principles, to improve Aboriginal social circumstances. The explicit intent of the cultural safety program was to provide a safer work environment for Aboriginal students and staff, and that of the policy research to ‘provide an evidence base that can assist Aboriginal Housing Services Tasmania to prepare future housing policies’ (Jacobs and Walter n.d.: 1).

At the level of connotation (Barthes 1968: 89-94), both contributed to the construction of the mythic Aboriginal culture, community and self as taken-for-granted reality. The training program facilitators introduced the program by telling participants how skin names and avoidance relationships worked in pre-colonial clan society, then quickly moved on (blurring the boundary between then and now) to say that Aboriginal Tasmanians are not from Western culture and, unlike Westerners, are not verbal and often consider it a sign of respect to avoid eye contact. In Aboriginal society, kinship is ‘extremely strong’, for instance:

Each of us [Aboriginal facilitators] in this room know where each of the others fits in our kinship. It goes beyond cousins; it is extremely complex and handed down, ... most of our knowledge is passed on orally through our elders (fieldnotes 4/11/2004).

The presenters said that there are significant cultural norms, strict rules and sanctions, a system of reciprocal obligations and taboos for men and women, all of which are respected. Elders, those who have achieved a certain rite of passage in terms of knowledge, take a major role in decision-making. To them, ‘the land is sacred’. In communicating with Aborigines at the university, one needed to respect a certain protocol, be very responsive to body language and gestures and

¹⁵ The program was based on curriculum developed by Phil Kelly in the Tasmanian Department of Education (TDoE 2001b). It was offered with the support of the university’s Vice Chancellor, ‘identified as an important component of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy’, delivered by Equal Employment Opportunity staff, and funded partly by the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and partly by a Teaching and Learning Grant. The policy research was commissioned by Aboriginal Housing Services Tasmania and conducted by academic staff of the university.

different attitudes to eye contact, and ‘ask’ rather than tell. One should be introduced, ‘engage an advocate so communication is quite clear’ and get permission to access lands (UTas 2004: 4-6; fieldnotes 4/11/2004).

The policy research (Jabobs and Walter n.d.: vii, 12, 13, 23) proposes similar notions. It refers to communal ties, supportive kin networks, extended family, ‘inappropriate design and location’, ‘[f]amily and community obligations [which] mean that many Aboriginal people will offer support and accommodation to others in need’, and ‘the expectation of reciprocity within the community’.

Both training program and policy research use official statistics to present disadvantage in politically-useful light. The former deals exclusively with national Aboriginal health, which is skewed by the situation in remote Australia, and ignores the less pronounced gap in the Aboriginal Tasmanian health profile. The latter makes comprehensive use of state level data to establish ‘stark differences’ in demography and housing circumstances between Aboriginal and other Tasmanians. It parallels that with the implication (pp. 3-6) that this disadvantage is consistent with that suffered by other Aboriginal Australians, thus obscuring the less pronounced gap between national and state demographic profile and socio-economic and housing status. This in turn leaves it to readers to make commonplace inferences: that Tasmanian disadvantage is ‘in common’ or ‘in line’ with national Aboriginal disadvantage.¹⁶

Both program and research locate the cause of that disadvantage in colonisation, racism and ethnocentrism. The program locates it in loss of culture through dispossession and assimilatory government programs; as one of the facilitators said, ‘We are marginalised because we are the other and we don’t fit’ (fieldnotes 4/11/04). The research looks for explanation in terms of inadequate provision for the defining Aboriginal characteristics. However, it found it impossible to do so, as it was unable to isolate any specifically *Aboriginal* social, behavioural or attitudinal patterns which distinguished Aboriginal demand for, problems gaining, or usage of housing. Rather, it found that Aboriginality could not be disentangled from other affiliations, and that ‘an unambiguous measure’ or

¹⁶ ABS and other official data reveal a similar pattern in educational outcome: Aboriginal outcomes in literacy and numeracy are generally poorer than other Tasmanians, but the gap is not as severe as it is for mainland Aboriginal people and others in the different states. A similar pattern occurs in respect of rates of home ownership and employment.

‘definitive assessment’ of the extent of homelessness among Aboriginal Tasmanian youth is ‘not available’ or possible (pp. 13, 20).

Other identarian assumptions were not supported by this policy research. Though Aborigines supposedly need to be housed close to their community, participants in focus groups said they wanted spot housing in the suburbs (p. 20). And though thought to have supportive kin networks, Aboriginal youth experienced greater ‘inter-generational tensions’ and ‘clashes’ with parents (pp. 15, 16, 20), left home earlier and needed single units more often than others. That is, the research found that little of the mythological Aboriginality and culturally inappropriate service delivery was supportable in fact.

The research usefully questioned some of the political orthodoxy, yet in its recommendations it defaulted to the claim that service needed to be ‘appropriate’ to the ‘extended family’ (p. 33), that ‘appropriate’ design and location was necessary (p. 32) to ‘meet the needs of this client group’ (p. 33), and that policy needed ‘input from Aboriginal organisations’ (p. 31). It commended one housing organisation for employing an Aboriginal worker, who could be expected to understand ‘the wider social and cultural situation of young Aboriginal people’ (p. 15).

The recommendations responded to myth rather than lived complexity, and this can happen more widely, with consultation in Aboriginal organisations and employment of Aboriginal workers merely reproducing the orthodox articles of faith and so improving understanding of the mythology rather than peoples’ lived realities. As it was, rather than providing a “hard evidence” (p. 3) base for housing policy or helping university staff to treat Aboriginal students with greater understanding, both policy and program added a layer of fantasy to the mythic Aboriginality on which policy and practice is built. Neither responded to the actuality of socially and culturally integrated Aboriginal lives. As an example of this failure to come to grips with reality, one participant in the program wanted to know how university staff might know of students’ Aboriginality in order to respond to them with sensitivity, and was told that ‘it’s pretty easy, they’ve got names like Mansell and Maynard’ (fieldnotes, 4/11/04). The discrepancy between discursive and lived reality means that neither policy nor program assisted understanding of what it is actually like to be Aboriginal in Tasmania, nor how

and why Aboriginal Tasmanians are socio-economically marginalised, nor how to respond more effectively to them and their needs.

Both cases mounted covert constitution of the mythic Aboriginal culture and self and the political logic parasitically on the overt goal of improvement to service delivery. References to kinship, community and disadvantage in the first denotative order communicated the second order of meaning, the underlying message of the bounded mythic Aboriginality (see Barthes 1968: 13-21, 91-4). The diffuseness of myth obscured the discrepancies with actual heterogeneity and allowed the default from empirical data to mythic conclusions to go unnoticed. Both program and research used the boundaries established by state definition to constitute the Aboriginal victim as a basis of identification, group solidarity and motivation for struggle.

This is a scramble for the margins consistent with the late twentieth-century global 'social movement in which "difference" (ethnic identity, gender, sexual orientation, even disabilities) became the basis for a claim to collective rights' (Kuper 1999: 224). It is what Sutton calls the politics of 'suffering' (2001), or 'voice' (2005: 2), in which the dire state of indigenous circumstances is 'simply and vaguely' attributed to colonisation and used in arguing the case for self-determination, culturally-appropriate service delivery and support mechanisms. This is the logic of the Aboriginal politics in Tasmania, where there is little cultural practice consistent with the pre-colonial, oppression and denial are minimal, disadvantage is relatively ameliorated and, as in the rest of Australia, 'most technical obstacles to equal rights have been removed' (Sutton 2001: 139). Rhetorical flourishes of nationhood and independence in this process of strategic minoritisation (Cowan 2001: 154) are tactical ploys directed at maximising the advantages to be had from ambiguity.

In order for the logic to work, the politics constructs a bounded and disadvantaged Aboriginality and causal linkages. This is so in schooling, where it mythicises oral learning styles, child autonomy, emotional honesty and practical interests as evidence of Aboriginality, and sets them antithetically against schooling, which, as an ethnocentric white institution, cannot understand or accommodate them. It makes both resistance and failure markers of Aboriginality and evokes the enactment of the cultural Aborigine, making failure and longer-

term disadvantage more certain. The resistance and failure it induces is then used as evidence of institutional failure.¹⁷

Substantialising particularity

Boundary work raises consciousness, evokes nostalgia, fear and desire, heightens liberatory expectations, produces solidarity against the white world, mobilises activism and builds support among progressive liberals. But the mythic Aboriginality must be accepted as a natural 'system of facts' (Barthes 2000: 131). In the concluding discussion of the training program for instance, several questions revealed an awareness in the audience of discrepancies between the story and the reality. Participants wanted to know more precisely what the claimed taboos were, how they might recognise an Aboriginal person and why they were being told to not look directly at people. The mythic was insufficient for them to work with.

Many Fourth World minorities (see Dyck 1985; Paine 1982, 1985; Barth 1969) base a politics, gain political leverage and resist incorporation through recourse to cultural forms like a living language, pre-colonial economic practices, continuing social structures, remote territory, specific religion, customary housing, costume, music and/or dance. However, where such bases of boundary (see Cohen 1989: 44) have disappeared, as in Tasmania, it is easy for outsiders to believe that the reality is similarity rather than difference. The politics has then to create signifiers of Aboriginality such as 'supportive kin', 'extended family' or 'culture' and imbue them with reinvented and transformed original meanings, language, tradition and history. It uses standardised representations which evoke metaphorical meanings of Aboriginality and interrelates them such that the full richness of meaning is called up by each individually insignificant signifier. It aims to have the Aboriginal and wider population 'read' those signifiers not as alibis for, but *as* Aboriginality (see Barthes 2000: 128).

¹⁷ The intent of the argument here is not to deny the realities of colonial violence, dispossession and disruption, institutional ethnocentrism and normalising pressure, socio-economic disadvantage, or the existence of some causal links. It is to suggest that the politics undertaken by the political elite contributes to the perpetuation of the disadvantage it apparently seeks to overcome, and makes it very difficult to examine the full dynamics of the disadvantage.

Thus a tattoo casually revealed or references to kinship can summon a range of intended images and an impression that will prevail over contradictory empirical evidence (see Barthes 1968; 2000). Most Aboriginal Tasmanians share with others the difficulties of melded families, domestic violence, family breakdown and divorce, and do not live in communities based on kin relationships but go home from work to their non-Aboriginal partners, nuclear families and consumer lifestyle in the suburbs. Profligate references to ‘Aunty’, ‘Elder’, ‘the old people’ and ‘our Ancestors’ though, are offered as incontrovertible evidence of the ‘*presence*’ (Barthes 2000: 116, 128) of Aboriginality. Mythic kinship speaks of Aboriginal cultural continuity.

Similar representation constitutes mutton-birding (see Felton 1991: 63; Ryan 1996) as Aboriginal presence. It is important emotionally and socially for some of the core community in that each season it reconstitutes for them a sense of community and connection to the past. But it is based on a traditional economic behaviour of minor dietary and cultural importance¹⁸ and is a syncretic mix (see Ryan 1996: 70-1) of that pre-colonial usage and the northern English practice of salting seabirds, and has in recent times been conducted primarily for commercial purposes. Nevertheless, contemporary political myth-making has indigenised it, replaced its place in pre-colonial society and development in the nineteenth century with a new history and naturalised it as retained ‘traditional Aboriginal cultural and social practice’ (Ryan 1996: xxix). It is now an iconic cultural practice regarded as critical to the survival of Aboriginal social integrity and identity. Thus, salted mutton-birds are referred to as ‘the foods of [the] black ancestors’ (TAC/TALC 2004: 10). This is an important part of the re-presentation of the Islander community as a patently Aboriginal community living in accord with its Aboriginal heritage.

Iconic photographs of Aboriginal men with muttonbirds on the spit (see Ryan 1996: 276) are called upon to be read as the presence of Aboriginality. The image

¹⁸ Ryan is faithful to the political representation of mutton-birding. The interpretation here is based on Ian McFarlane’s PhD dissertation (2002: 40) which states that ‘the main source of food derived from the mutton bird was most likely the eggs ... the birds themselves provided only a small part of the Aboriginal diet. ... The idea of salting and storing these young birds in barrels, originated, like many of the sealers, from Great Britain. There was a long tradition of harvesting young seabirds in this manner in the northern British islands.’ He refers to Skira (1993) and Bowdler (1974) in his argument.

and practice are evidence of uniqueness and continuity with the past, to be read by progressives as proof of landed, hard-working Aboriginality, by the core community as solidarity and by other Aborigines as evidence of authenticity. That Aboriginality is the basis of claim to entitlement from the state, and evidence of the Islander-based practice that diminishes the claimed Aboriginality of other Tasmanians.

Many markers of culture contribute to the making of a field of connotations and associations that trigger the mythical schema of Aboriginality. The practice of making shell necklaces was a part of social and cultural life and continues to be practiced by older women who pass on the knowledge to the young for its own sake. But it is also used for political ends (for instance in the NAIDOC Week celebrations of 2005) and its meanings for those who practice it are used to nourish the idea of cultural continuity. Traditional hunting and fishing practices, particularly the collecting of abalone, have a similar dual literal and metaphorical reality. The practice of abalone collecting has become a sign of Aboriginality, represented as critical to the survival of community, culture and identity. One prominent Aboriginal member of the Fanny Cochrane-Smith (FC-S) community openly collects more than the bag limit, shares them with his family and argues a cultural defence in court.¹⁹ He argues that the traditional seasonal calendar and cultural obligations survive, and that the state continues to deny him his rights to practice his culture as an Aborigine. Damper and wallaby stew are widely used at events and ceremonies in this metaphorical way. They reference a certain time, place and situation in which they had a utilitarian function but are now regarded nostalgically and, saturated with meaning and combined with other signifiers such as the Aboriginal flag, signify the past and its hardships, discrimination and disadvantage, and community and solidarity.

Consistent with the nature of this process of tradition-making, these markers are always open to reinvention. Recently, the historical narrative of Aboriginal women, which for a long time maintained that they were abducted by sealers to the Bass Strait Islands against their will (see Lehman 1990: 8), has been reinterpreted to enrol the sealers in the story of cultural continuity:

¹⁹ See *The Mercury* 26/1/00; 6/8/03: 5.

The destructive invaders did not imprison those Aborigines living in relationships with white people. It became evident that white sealers had “married” into the Aboriginal people, not the other way around. The bond with Aboriginal ancestry overwhelmed the introduced European culture and values ... All things associated with an Aboriginal community remained—Aboriginal physical features, elements of the old language, cultural practices and an understandable animosity to the whites (TAC/ALCT 2004: 3).

Rehabilitating the white forebears of the ‘established’ contemporary Aboriginal families, this contributes to the myth of the Islander community as the sole authentic group of the Aboriginal population of Tasmania.

Makers of myth build a store of such representations and metaphors and discursively appropriate meaning from the store to ‘direct’ consumers’ reading of the myth, which over time becomes conventionalised and done less than fully consciously (see Barthes 1968: 58-9). That is, myth-consumers are socialised to interpret stock signifiers in conventional ways, and so the mythic schema is gradually transformed into nature (see Barthes 2000: 129).

This can occur where signifiers have little original substance, as the reconstruction by the TAC of the language known as *palawa kani* shows. *palawa kani* is not a reconstituted old language but one newly constituted from language fragments, themselves possibly pidgins (Plomley 1977: 33-4), recorded by various Europeans including the untrained George Augustus Robinson.²⁰ At the literal level, as in *Eddystone Point: larapuna in lumaranatana* (TAC 2001: 2), the language is factual, reasonable and a-political:

Watanimarina, Manalakina, Tanganutara—you might not recognise these words but they’re the names of some of our ancestors. We’re more used to seeing them spelt many different ways in the English alphabet by the Europeans who wrote about our people: ‘Woreterneemmerunner’, ‘Mannalargenna’, ‘Tingernotareher’, etc. These aren’t Aboriginal words, though, just attempts by white people to write down the unfamiliar languages in their spelling system ... In this book we spell our peoples’ names with the *palawa kani* alphabet,

²⁰ See *The Sunday Tasmanian* 20/07/03: 14-15; *The Australian* 10/07/03: 5.

which consistently shows the original Aboriginal sounds of each word. The *palawa kani Sound and Spelling* book can tell you how this alphabet was developed so we no longer have to use white peoples spellings for our language words.

Beyond that level, and in the context of other signifiers and connotations, *palawa kani* implies primordial Otherness and white perfidy. It has no functional use in daily communication but operates as a sign, taking on metaphorical meanings and itself receding from view to become Aboriginality. The elite use it as a means of asserting the core community *plus* as a legitimate group (TAC/Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages 2000) and as different from others who might identify as Aborigines. To some of the elite (see Everett, cited in Daniels 1995: 35-6), the ‘term “Pallawah” is distinctly Tasmanian. As a spiritual name it takes us back to the genesis of the race, unifying all descendants’.

Subsequently, the language has been woven into aspects of everyday discourse by the producers of myth. For example, one woman who was at one time known as ‘Vicky Matson-Green’ (see Matson-Green n.d.; 1999) has moved from that construction to become ‘Maykutenner (English name: Vicky Matson-Green)’ (see McGrath 1995: xiii) and then, in a version that more authentically spells and avoids capitalisation, ‘Vicky maikutener Matson-Green’ (see Alexander 2005: 379). In June 2005 another prominent producer of myth opened an interpretation installation on Mt Wellington that contained a number of *palawa kani* words drilled into metal panels with the words:

“It’s a powerful statement within itself, just having the language there,” he said. Alongside the panels are a series of steel perforated plates with Aboriginal words on them, which relate to the mountain. If you stand back you can see the words, they are made with different diameter holes through the rest of the plate. “I wanted to write the words with the wind. My personal belief is that our culture is carried in the wind. When the wind blows through the panels and hits you, you get the words in it,” [he] said. “You look through the perforations and the words are formed by the textures and colours of the land. The

panels are a way of having the wind and land speak the words in a way that non-Aboriginal people can understand.²¹

This returned to earlier themes; when concluding comments at a book launch, he had asked the audience to listen for the voice of a recently deceased prominent elder, which they would ‘hear in the wind, in the birds, that is where Tasmanian Aboriginal culture resides, and that will never be silenced’ (fieldnotes, 11/9/03).

Aboriginal culture is substantialised in the aggregation of words, installation and assertion, each instance summoning meanings audiences have internalised as credible links to Aboriginality. Above, the link is authentic connection to nature and the land and, in the reference to ‘silencing’, the struggle against oppression. The constructedness, syncretism and redundancy of the language evade analysis, and many accept it as Aboriginality without qualification: in response to my queries of members of the audience at the book launch above I was told that the speaker’s reference reflected his Aboriginal spirituality (pers. comm., 11/9/03), and in its coverage of the installation, the *Koori Mail* (29/6/05) reported that ‘it has only been in the past decade that authentic Aboriginal content has been consistently included in interpretation installations in Tasmania’.

This demonstrates that myth does not lie but dissembles. It has some basis in fact but is less a matter of fact than of implication and metaphor. It is duplicitous but amorphous, so discrepancies between the mythical and the evidential often need not be explained. Individual myth readers can be trusted to explain discrepancy as the odd instance which does not fit the stereotype, allowing them to avoid the truth. When deployed with skill, accompanied by the range of induced connotations like innate knowledge of nature, the Dreaming or belongingness to the land, discrepant truth cannot challenge myth. And the belief in this Tasmanian myth is such that the politics can fall back on tautological claim like that ‘it’s a black thing, you wouldn’t understand’ (see Bhabha 1994: 3, note 3). It can present unknowability as itself proof of ineffable Aboriginality and others’ outsider-ness. Mystification can build an apparently plausible story it would be churlish to question. And many progressives suspend disbelief and blame colonisation and assimilation for Aboriginal failures to live up to the mythical family, spirituality or respect for Mother Earth.

²¹ *Koori Mail*, 29/6/05: 13.

Appropriating cultural credentials

In his analysis of mythology, Barthes discusses housing in the Basque region as the source of references on which an architectural 'Basquity' is built (2000: 124-25). The original exists in a whole context and unself-consciously, of and for itself, and is limited by technology, while the mythical copy references selected elements without constraints and for a motivated communicative purpose. In Tasmania the politics draws on prominent characteristics of the Aboriginality of remote central and northern Australia. It also establishes a oneness with the global indigenous dimensions of the category, including Tasmanian Aboriginality within a generic pan-Australian, pan-indigenous category, reducing differences between the component groups to sameness.

Some Tasmanians (for example AA1; AA5) go north to learn about or recover their notional culture, and some return with adopted skin names. After a visit to central Australia Professor Errol West named himself Errol *Tjapanangka* or *Japanangka* errol West.²² This appropriation of cultural credentials occurs too, in government publications. An Arts Tasmania publication, *Respecting Cultures* (Everett 2003), providing guidance to artists in their work with Aboriginal material and seeking to promote fairness, reconciliation and relations of 'harmony and goodwill' (p. 6), uses the conventional signifiers 'culture', 'community', 'self-determination' and 'appropriate' practice, and references shell necklace-making and basketry. It alludes to a history of commercial deception and concludes (pp. 25-8) with instances of sensitive and appropriate practice as evidence of the importance and mutual benefit to be had from compliance with its recommended protocols.

At the 'plane of association' (Barthes 1968: 58), the booklet (p. 16) communicates another message—that Aboriginal Tasmanians are the same as others around Australia—and thence the political logic which that identification grounds. It invites the reader to accept that sameness by writing that 'the Australia Council's *Protocols for Producing Indigenous Arts*, ... apply equally in Tasmania' (p. 6) and using key signifiers of latent meaning including 'ceremonial body

²² See West 1998; National Tertiary Education Union Media Release 12/4/2001. The name 'Japanangka' indicates the 'skin' or sector of the community to which the individual belongs. Many longer-term visitors to remote communities are given a skin name to fit them into the community and organise social interaction.

markings', 'secret-sacred', 'spiritual and cultural connections with the land and sea', 'Special Places' and sensitivities around the 'deceased' (pp. 12, 17, 19, 22). The booklet claims that the 'Tasmanian Aboriginal community does not separate culture, heritage and arts into disconnected categories, but regards them as integral components of a whole' (p. 8). Each iconic marker invokes images of classical Aboriginal culture, the political logic and the required special consideration. Everything tells the reader that Aboriginal Tasmanians have the same communal ownership (p. 22), holistic knowledge, 'value systems and cultural beliefs' (p. 16). *Respecting Cultures* ensures that readers register Aboriginal Tasmanian-ness as classical Aboriginality.

Via references to 'moral integrity and ethical practice' (p. 17), 'good faith' (p. 23) and 'respect' (p. 20), the booklet reminds readers of colonial and commercial breaches of integrity, associating contemporary artists and cultural entrepreneurs with those practices and hopefully arousing in them a sense of ethical responsibility. Those reminders and the claim that the culture is threatened by such breaches and needs protection, identify contemporary Aborigines as innocent victims with a selfless concern to protect culture. The booklet also 'inoculates' (Barthes 2000: 150-51) its essentialism by admitting (p. 16, 13) local deviance from the expected Aboriginality, political intent in contemporary dance and (pp. 10-14) distinguishing between cultural survival, retrieval and contemporary arts.

These associations and techniques place Aboriginal Tasmanian culture and demands made in its name beyond critique. Readers are given every reason to forgive the cultural hyperbole and strident tone, leaving the author, editors and reviewers, all members of the political elite, free to expect 'the right to have their culture respected', to determine whether 'content is factual or authentic' and to provide 'informed advice', state that avoidance of the protocols 'is simply unacceptable' and restrict authority to use the language (pp. 16-22). *Respecting Cultures* promises that artists can have a relationship of ease with Aborigines if they accept the equation of the Tasmanians with classical Aboriginality and abide by those demands.

As recognised in commonwealth legislation, school curriculum materials, the training program and policy report above, and *Respecting Cultures*, deep knowledge of, spiritual connection to, and sustainable custodianship of the land is

an iconic aspect of Aboriginality. Colonial dispossession is considered the critical cause of contemporary disadvantage and the return of land fundamental to contemporary self-determination and social and cultural health. Part of the politics is thus to assert that they have the same social, cultural, economic and spiritual relationship with the land as pre-colonial aborigines in Tasmania and current northern Australian Aborigines.

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (TALSC) claims those credentials by stating in a full-page advertisement in the local newspaper that ‘Tasmanian Aborigines have a 50,000-year history of sustainable management of the forests’.²³ One prominent spokesperson repeatedly asserts Aboriginal reverence for Earth Mother (Everett 1997a, 1997b, 2000), and in making claims for the ‘return’ or ‘handback’ of land (see Mansell 1976) the TAC refers to ‘our ancestors’. In those claims, Aboriginal Tasmanians assert their identity with the original owners of the land. Mansell (1980) argues that ‘land rights is the only hope we have as a race of people’, and another spokesperson that ‘[owning] the land is healing our people. We definitely need more land to keep the culture going, and so we are not assimilated into mainstream Tasmania.’²⁴ This identification extends to the indigeneity of those living on their own remote lands and practicing continuing economic activities and cultural traditions: the elite constitute Aboriginal Tasmanians as an indigenous People according to United Nations definition (see Stamatopoulou 1994; Fleras 1999), identify the Tasmanian struggle with the ‘struggle of any people to fight off oppression, starvation, death, discrimination and political powerlessness’ and compare it with that of the ‘black American civil war, ... South Africa, ... and ‘the struggles of other indigenous peoples around the world including the Kanaks’ (Mansell n.d.: 1, 7).

Constructing temporal and spatial oneness

Thus the Aboriginal Tasmanian community, culture, self, history and social position become one with national and international indigenes. But it is the core community *plus* that comes to be ‘The’ Aboriginal Tasmanians. The politics assimilates to the core community *plus* the particular histories and cultural

²³ The *Saturday Mercury* 2/10/04: 15; see also TAC/ALCT 2004: 6.

²⁴ Southern Cross local television news, 13/2/04.

heritages of all pre-colonial Tasmanian groups into a single contemporary imagined community and collective and individual self. The cultural substance enhances the cultural authenticity and political dominance of the core community *plus*. All pre-colonial aborigines become ‘our ancestors’, where the ‘our’ implies the core community *plus*. The core community *plus* absorbs the cultural substance of a number of groups and eliminates others’ ownership of artefacts and heritage. The following statement is an illustrative example of the process of accumulation of cultural capital, assumption of singularity and internal marginalisation:

According to Aboriginal law and custom, the lands of tribes killed off by whites passed to other tribes, not to the white people who had killed them off. This was evident during the ‘survival’ wars of the 1820s where the tribes joined together against the common enemy. Today’s Aborigines inherit all traditional lands, just as Aborigines whose ancestry is from mainland Australia but were born here also inherit our historical rights to our lands. We are one Aboriginal people (TAC 2001: 2).

This statement manipulates a mythical interpretation of a generic ‘Aboriginal law and custom’, a generalised notion of tribal co-operation, an overly-generous representation of the way mainland Aborigines are treated and the usual opposition with the Other. It contradicts the history of the relationships between at least some of the tribes, as Ian McFarlane’s (2002, 2008) history of the north-west shows. Those of the north-east and north-west were enemies, such that ‘traditional tribal differences prevented any collaboration against a common enemy despite attempts to forge such an alliance’ (McFarlane 2002: 93 note 76). And the claimed oneness with mainland Aborigines ignores the reality that some resident mainland Aborigines are accepted and others marginalised. In fact, the Aboriginality of some people from remote northern Australian communities was denied in the ITAC appeal process (fieldnotes, 9/07/02).

Though widely practiced, the tradition of mutton-birding has through these politics become Aboriginal and of the Furneaux Islands, not of others. *Palawa kani* is a mix of several defunct languages that now signifies the authenticity of the core community *plus* (see TAC 2001), exclusive of less powerful Aborigines (see Everett 2005). Claims for the return of land and human remains have been

made by the TAC and its predecessor the Aboriginal Information Centre (AIC) on the basis of a contemporary singular ‘community’, applied retrospectively to distinct pre-colonial peoples. The AIC ‘demanded Truganini’s remains for her descendants—all living Tasmanian Aborigines’ (Cove 1995: 150)—and thereby conveniently assumed a ‘linear equivalence’ (Bhabha 1990a: 292) between Truganini and the dominant contemporary political organisation.

The first step in both campaigns was to claim to represent the interests of all Aboriginal Tasmanians and to have a responsibility to them. In the case of land, the claim has been ‘on behalf of all Tasmanian Aborigines [that they] need not consider pre-contact conceptions of territoriality or tribal divisions’ (Cove 1995: 114) and that the contemporary group has a responsibility to continue the struggles of their Ancestors. In the case of human remains, the core community *plus* has assumed responsibility for all Tasmanians including some ‘traditional enemies’ and those like William Lanney whose tribal heritage is unknown (McFarlane 2002: viii, 202). In those campaigns, pre-colonial heterogeneity is elided (as was the role of the church in the case of Truganini’s remains, see Cove 1995: 143).

These are instances of the creation of a monologic history and tradition favourable to contemporary sectional interests (see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992). In the *Companion to Tasmanian History*, Vicky Matson-Green (2005: 379) portrays an Aboriginal woman named Walyer as a ‘resistance fighter, ... a true warrior of the cause’, who was enslaved by sealers, escaped and gathered an army to fight a guerilla war against the white invaders:

She ‘hated the *luta tawin* [white man] as much as she did a black snake’, for the injuries perpetrated against her people ... [She] refused to bend and nurtured her anger and hatred ... In 1828 [she] returned to her Country where she led the remnants of her people to war and strategically planned her attacks.

Some academic history (Ryan 1996: xxx) accepts this portrayal and some does not. McFarlane (2002: 133) argues that:

the breakdown of the tribal system had spawned a group of rogue Aborigines under the leadership of a Tommeginer woman named Walyer. After a rift with her tribe, Walyer, joined by her two brothers and two sisters, ran away to live with the sealers.

While with the sealers, they learned how to speak English and use guns, and: on return to the mainland their proficiency in the use of firearms granted them inordinate power over the relatively defenceless Aboriginal families that still inhabited the coastal region. Walyer was joined by other displaced Aborigines, creating a band that ranged from Port Sorell to Cape Grim, raiding black and white alike, and according to Pevay killing Aborigines in the process (McFarlane 2005: 379-80).

Mannalargenner is another Aboriginal figure whose story has been shaped by ideology in the creation of a synchronous national story (see Bhabha 1994: 172-75, 250-51). The core community *plus* claims him as a heroic Aboriginal Tasmanian. He is referred to (Lehman cited in Shakespeare 2004: 199) as ‘a fine man, a great warrior’ and claimed by a great many as their authorising ancestor. He is venerated and his deeds valorised. With the ‘Ancestors’ and ‘Old People’, he becomes an epic figure who exhibits no human indecision, doubt or weakness, indeterminacy or openendedness (Bakhtin 1981: 16). As cult figures, no sense of Walyer, Truganini or Lanney as people with human weaknesses or (in the case of Mannalargenna) inadequacies as a leader is allowed to appear in the orthodox history.

The myth elides difficult detail and the politics opposes attempts to critically examine the part of those figures in colonial history. They resist the possibility of Walyer’s voluntary relationship with sealers or her rogue behaviour. McFarlane (2002: 180, 186-87) reveals that in his travels with Robinson, Mannalargenna was threatened by a north-west chief and had to be rescued by Robinson and Pevay, and that another old chief ‘seized Mannalargenna’s spear and tried to break it over his head’. In reviewing Ryan’s celebratory account of the Islanders *as* the Tasmanians, Plomley (1982: 39) cautioned that the Islanders ‘have no more than a partial’ relationship with the original inhabitants and their culture, because:

the kinship of the Aboriginal Tasmanians of today is based partly on Tasmanian Aborigines, partly on Australian Aborigines and partly on Europeans; and their culture has its basis partly in Aboriginal culture and partly in European culture.

These inconvenient interpretations are resisted. In most subsequent accounts the fact that the Islanders have developed another culture is easily glossed with

optimistic assumptions that ‘there is a continuity of some aspects of their earlier culture today’ (Daniels 1995: 24). A certain Aboriginal tradition, history and iconography have become sacrosanct, putting beyond question the contemporary constructions and epistemic violence done to other pasts. The identity between the contemporary core community *plus* and the several pre-colonial peoples is largely taken for granted and a synchronous history has emerged in which many ‘lost histories of a variety of Black experiences’ (Hall 1991b: 57) are submerged. This is the result of active measures to curtail critical examination and because mythic orthodoxy:

purifies [things], it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact ... it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organises a world without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves (Barthes 2000: 143).

The dominant mythic past and its heroic figures have been ‘constructed as epic’ (Bakhtin 1981: 13-20). Epic relies on ‘impersonal and sacrosanct tradition, on a commonly held evaluation and point of view—which excludes any possibility of another approach’ (Bakhtin 1981: 17). The epic past becomes simply ‘how it was, impossible to change: ... sacred’ (Bakhtin 1981: 15). It becomes ‘the source of all authentic reality and value’ such that ‘everything incorporated into [it is] simultaneously incorporated into a condition of authentic essence and significance’ (Bakhtin 1981: 16). However, by ‘attaching them to the world of fathers, beginnings’ (Bakhtin 1981: 14), the time and value contours of the epic past can be transferred to current events to invest them with similar status.

Epic status authorises the interpretation of current events and claims made in the name of Ancestors and tradition, such as to look after the land, recover remains and treat them with respect according to custom. It allows inflection of the tradition, such as white forebears ‘marrying in’ or law regarding tribal lands to

be folded into the epic without question. Epic distance lends the past a character outside history, cultural interaction or political intervention. It makes the definition of custom, claims to cultural substance and sameness with northern Aborigines unimpeachable and confounds alternative interpretations. As evident in *Respecting Cultures*, this Aboriginality demands ‘a pious attitude toward itself’ and its acceptance ‘with reverence’ (Bakhtin 1981: 17).

These elements in the mythological schema aggregate to authorise the claim to ‘Aboriginal Tasmanian’ sovereignty, as the elite claim:

our rights are those accorded to all indigenous peoples around the world. Hence we are not restricted to the rights that Greeks, Italians or white Australians are entitled because we are a separate people, the Aboriginal people from a territory called Australia. Any development of world standards which apply to indigenous people—including the right to self-determination, government, having their own laws applied to them and generally being in control of themselves—must also apply to us (Mansell 1993: 37).

Those rights are expressed in the demands of the Aboriginal Provisional Government (APG) for ‘absolute, unfettered’ (Mansell n.d.) autonomous control and ‘freedom of self-determination as Aborigines’ (Everett in Mansell n.d.).

The institutionalisation of the mythic Aboriginal Tasmanian

The webs of significance described above, including the chain of causality linking colonisation and discrimination to disadvantage, and then to self-determination as solution, ‘creep ... through the back door of Nature’ (Barthes 2000: 131) and are highly influential with Aborigines, wider public and state political elite. Teachers accept the idea of Aboriginal ‘learning styles’, parliamentarians accept that the ‘traditional mutton-birding activities of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people ... have taken place for centuries’ (Fletcher 1995: 32) and academics take Aboriginality as a given and perceive traditions to be laudable reclamations of the stolen cultural heritage (see Clark 1983; Ryan 1996; McGrath 1995: xxv).

The mythology also constitutes for many Aborigines a *conscience collective* that prevails over their own discrepant lived realities. On the ABC television

program *Message Stick*,²⁵ two Aboriginal footballers were interviewed by an Aboriginal compere. One of them, Adam Goodes, told how he first met the other, Michael O'Loughlin, when he came to the club, only to be told that they were cousins. Though Goodes had on another occasion²⁶ announced that his mother was a removed child and that he had learned his understanding of Aboriginality in a formal Aboriginal Studies course, he finished the TV interview by saying that 'it is good knowing someone is out there who's come from where I've come from'. Some Aboriginal Tasmanian academics share this faith in a national Aboriginal communitas. Ian Anderson for example, believes²⁷ that it is vital to have 'more Aboriginal people working in our hospitals and doctor's surgeries, because they have a better, more intrinsic understanding of the issues that face indigenous peoples'. The mythology also provides the 'solid ground' on which some constitute a Tasmanian sensibility, as did an elder of the Bass Strait Islander community:

Here on the mainland of Tasmania I didn't begin to have any feeling of a special relationship to the land until very recently. I was looking out at the countryside one day and I started thinking about what it must have been like when the old people roamed across it. I realised it was the first time that I'd thought about my ancestors – the old people – since I'd come here [the Tasmanian mainland] more than forty years ago. It really affected me. I'd always thought about them on the islands, but I'd never thought of them here before. I thought, "Well, they really are part of me." It changed my whole way of seeing Tasmania (Felton 1991: 78).

The myth constitutes an emotionally powerful self. Newly-elected Aboriginal Member of Parliament, Kathryn Hay, who had no previous connection with the community (Purcell 2002: 229), wept in the public gallery when the Legislative Council voted to transfer ownership of Cape Barren and Clarke islands to the Aboriginal community.²⁸ Many others internalise the message of oppression and their own loss of a transcendental Aboriginal self. They learn that Aboriginality is

²⁵ 10/7/2005.

²⁶ *The Weekend Australian* 26-27/6/04: 1, 49.

²⁷ *The Australian* 28/4/04: 34

²⁸ *The Mercury* 24/3/05: 5.

total and feel that their own Aboriginal identity has been ‘stripped away’, leaving a shell, a person ‘in limbo’ (Chandler in Direen 1994: 12-13), and they are vulnerable to the notion that there is a whole self that can be recovered. For them, the myth offers security and they adopt the mythic unitary self as their real (if alienated) self, and begin to live their lives according to that imagined facticity. One prominent activist’s comments suggest that they can do so even if their own lived reality is contradictory:

The totality of my identity occurred to me when I went to Hobart – I became political. I said: ‘Don’t call me white, I’m black. Don’t call me part-Aborigine. I’m Aborigine’ (Lehman, in Shakespeare 2004: 199).

And, despite the obvious discrepancy of his German and Irish heritage, which this activist dismissed as ‘mongrel’ (Shakespeare 2004: 199), many in the wider community continue to accept and believe in his Aboriginality. He is in demand, as an Aborigine, to open art shows and installations, launch books, address human rights fora and writers’ workshops and provide guest lectures at the university.

Despite some resistance (Daniels 1995: 57-60), the mythological schema has come to be accepted by state politicians and administrators. In 1991, 1995 and 2005, state parliament considered the ‘return’ of parcels of land to ‘the Aboriginal people of Tasmania’. On the first two occasions the Premier’s second reading speech affirmed the mythical schema. In respect of the Aboriginal Lands Bill 1995 (Tasmanian Parliamentary Hansard, 24/10/1995), Liberal Premier Ray Groom said:

Transfer of land ownership to the Aboriginal community will enable greater priority to be given to cultural and self-management wishes. Also, the Aboriginal community will be able to create job opportunities and thereby become more self-sufficient. This will enable Aboriginal people to develop programs that will bring real benefits to the community, both cultural and economic ... land has special significance to Aboriginal people. Land is viewed as a community concept and resources are shared throughout the community.

In the second reading of the Aboriginal Lands Amendment Bill 1999 (Tasmanian Parliamentary Hansard 2/12/99), Labor Premier Jim Bacon was more fulsome, saying in part:

This package ... is a key initiative in ensuring the recognition and survival of Aboriginal heritage and culture. Aborigines have different values, perceptions, social structures, spirituality and beliefs from Europeans. These ... combine to form the core of Aboriginal identity and are based on cultural values, contemporary social position, shared past history and current experiences. A big part of Aboriginal identity is their relationship with the land and sea. This is often talked about but rarely understood by the non-Aboriginal community. Land ownership is viewed by Aborigines as fundamental to well-being, both individually and collectively as a people. To understand the basis of Aboriginal spirituality in relation to the land and sea, it is necessary to understand a different way of living and thinking. The connection between land, sea and spirituality is central to Aboriginal identity and culture. The basic assertion by Aboriginal people is that they belong to the land and this relationship to the land is inalienable. Aborigines also see the land and the sea with no false boundaries. They are part of one another ... the Government ... considers that land ownership is a key initiative in ensuring the recognition and survival of Aboriginal heritage and culture in this state.

These Tasmanian Premiers validated the mythic Aboriginal relationship to land, identity over time and space, spirituality and communality, and the wider societal culpability for their situation. They also validated the notion that Aboriginal interests are simply to have their originary culture recognised and so are politically disinterested. This legitimisation of the mythical schema occurs routinely. National research bodies consider 'Palawa' in the same breath as 'Nyoongar, Koori, Murri, Ngaanyatjarra and Nunga' (National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) 2003b: 3) and mandate 'community' support for research (NHMRC 2003a; 2003b). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) implements an Indigenous Community Engagement Strategy in all states. Tasmanian law and government agencies (see Government of Tasmania 1975;

1996; 2006; n.d.; Allen 1995) grant Aboriginal community organisations such as the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council significant control of artefacts and sites. Centrelink treats mutton-birding as cultural activity. Government agencies consult with spokespeople and schools 'the Aboriginal community' (see Felton 1991: 2) to develop appropriate curriculum, and universities Aboriginalise their staff. Museums adopt protocols determining relations with Aborigines (see Arts Tasmania 2003) and governments seek the agreement of 'the Aboriginal community' for publications, programs and policies.

These routinised perceptions and ordered social formations institutionalise the mythical Aboriginal culture and self and the relationship with other Tasmanians. There is an established 'reciprocal typification of habitualised actions' by the participants in the relationship and predictable behaviours (Berger and Luckman 1966: 72). In this case institutionalisation has not developed in the paradigmatic way through interaction over time in 'concrete social processes' (Berger and Luckman 1966: 72-80) but as the product of a dialectic between progressive public policy and Aboriginal political myth-making. The mythic Aboriginality and clandestine relationship with the state that authorises it is entrenched. The TAC is invested with legal authority as custodians of the land and the status to act as representative for pre-colonial groups with museums in England.

The myth has become real (see Merton 1995), and the discursive Aboriginality is transformed into a substantive entity, with real consequences. Consumers of Aboriginality who may have vacillated between manifest and latent meaning, between history and nature, are likely to accept the Mt Wellington installation *as* Aboriginality and accept the core community *plus* as a knowledgeable and responsible corporate manager of land without need of rational explanation; similarly, agencies of the core community *plus* can expect the support of government departments in disputation over Aboriginal artefacts (see Allen 1995; Murray and Allen 1995; Ryan 1996: 293).

On this basis the producers of myth can trust that liberal progressives and government decision-makers will allow decisions to be made by default or left to Aborigines. Inertia acts to secure the status quo: it excuses individuals from the need to consider claims critically, to examine the history of myth-making or to question the information provided by authorised bodies. It allows teachers to leave

the teaching of Aboriginal Studies to ‘the experts’, often prominent members of the core community *plus*.

Ultimately though, the institutionalised myth actually responds more to an abstract categoric Aboriginality than to living Aborigines. ‘Culturally-appropriate’ policies, programs and practices institutionalise the mythic and therefore the discrepancy between mythic and lived reality. Developed through consultation with representatives of the core community *plus*, who may provide them with the myth as fact, they are largely directed at chimeras. This self-referential circle can institutionalise an inverse relationship between consultation and actual appropriateness: the more that policy, program and practice is developed in accordance with guidelines and acceptable to Aboriginal power-brokers, the more likely is it that the information will refer to the mythic Aboriginality that suits their needs, and the greater the distance from the lived reality.

The institutionalisation of mythic Aboriginality means that many individuals, integrated in several universes of meaning and subjectively multiple, can be *disadvantaged* by culturally-appropriate programs and practices that treat them as the mythic Aborigine rather than as individuals. Policy, program and practice that are respectful, sensitive and appropriate in a formulaic way can mean that individuals are housed in areas with others of ‘their community’ rather than in the spot housing they may prefer. It can mean that their schooling is restricted to learning by observation, imitation and practice in situations of immediate relevance, which is inadequate to the most basic modern needs. It can mean that Aboriginal Studies curriculum has little relevance to contemporary Aboriginality. If employed on the basis of Anderson’s innate understanding above, it may even mean that they lose their jobs if unable to divine Aboriginal patients’ needs or communicate particularly well with them. And it can mean that these problems cannot be explored.

The defence of the Aboriginal Tasmanian

The mythic Aboriginal culture and self is not undebated. Some Aborigines can, particularly through education, read it critically. Some reject its impoverished version of culture. Lived Aboriginalities contradict it every day, the dissent of those whose Aboriginality is not acceptable to the core *plus* is evident, and the

contradictions and their obfuscation produce some residual doubt, making the myth vulnerable to exposure through ideological, political and social scientific critique. This section of the chapter considers the ways in which the political elite ensure compliance with the myth in the face of deviations from and challenges to it.

Managing outsiders: the politics of embarrassment

In his 1995 book, John Cove (1995: 153) commented that in the 1970s debate over the return of Truganini's remains, the forerunner of the present TAC 'had shown that the "politics of embarrassment" could force the state to change its position'. He also (1995: 154-57) considered the part played by the Attorney-General, Max Bingham, in the debate over the return of the Crowther Collection,²⁹ and suggested that Bingham rejected the proposed return because of the political uses to which it was being put by the TAC and the suspicion that the TAC was not representative of Aboriginal views. In the event, Aboriginal resistance was enhanced by commonwealth and local parliamentary opposition and media support which portrayed Bingham's and the government's stance as insensitive to Aboriginal wishes (1995: 156).

Goffman (1957) theorised embarrassment to occur when social interaction goes awry as a result of breaches of interactional propriety. Commonly, this interaction is between individuals in face-to-face encounter, but often individuals act as representatives of classes or groups and the encounter can span a series of recurrent encounters and/or virtual encounters. He (1957: 268) argues that participants share a desire for interactional ease and so conform to a set of discursive presuppositions and norms of acceptable conduct and the obligation to 'accept and honour' the others in the interaction to ensure that it proceeds with ease. Embarrassment is caused by breach of the rules of appropriate conduct in that interactional encounter or series of encounters. The individuals who disrupt or fail to sustain interaction in this way, and by extension the groups which they represent, are embarrassed. They may be weakened as participants and may opt out, curtail participation in the interaction or avoid future situations that are likely

²⁹ This was a collection of human remains collected by Dr William Crowther; see Ryan 1996: 214-20.

to cause similar discomfort. Translating Goffman's meaning, the conditions governing easy social interaction and embarrassment across a range of frames can be called Felicity's Condition (see Goffman 1983: 27).

Using this notion, the Tasmanian situation above can be seen as one of embarrassment and the desire to avoid making a scene, though the fact that the Attorney-General was able to publicly raise the objections he did, and that the TAC could not avoid responding, suggests that during the 1970s the progressive conditions governing the Aboriginal-state relationship were being negotiated. Though he represented the white world and all the associated connotations, critically guilt surrounding colonial dispossession, the terms of the relationship had yet to be fully elaborated or legitimated. The TAC stood as representative of the class of people victim to that colonial domination, and was able to manipulate but not fully control the conditions of embarrassment by claims of cultural and racial insensitivity. Only later was the mythic self able to provoke sufficient embarrassment to bring about a change of approach.

Over the intervening years, the terms of the relationship have been institutionalised. Interaction is based on progressive principles and logic that causally links Aboriginal disadvantage with colonisation and discrimination and determines the means of recovery. It is based on the mythic Aboriginal culture and self, now thoroughly elaborated, authorised and consistently presented with certainty and poise despite the pervasive discrepancies with Aborigines' lived realities. Contemporary Aboriginal politics has manipulated these conditions to gain control of the relationship and mute or force critique of the mythic culture and self to become surreptitious.

The politics engenders in progressive interactants feelings of guilt and invokes a sense of potential embarrassment that makes them willing to tactfully accept the presented self despite the discrepancies. Critical questioning of the projected Aboriginal self can breach the established conditions of interaction and so embarrassment and tact protect it from discreditation. In this context, a breach can result not in a discreditation of the presenter for the exposure of discrepancy as might be usual, but a stigmatisation of the questioner. The critic can be seen to be blaming the victim or racist. Unlike in Bingham's case, the conditions now invoke

a fear of stigma and social embarrassment that more often stop critical questioning before it occurs.

In the aforementioned cultural training program, several participants noted discrepancies between the portrayed Aboriginality and the Aboriginal presenters themselves and the Aboriginal Tasmanian situation in general, and put questions regarding those discrepancies to the presenters. Though the responses simply repeated mythic claims made in the program and were inadequate as explanation, they allowed most of the audience to refrain from further questioning and avoid exposing the mythic self and discrediting the presenters. Unusually though, one man persisted with probing questions. The presenters were unable to substantiate the presented self, other than with mythology and inoculatory and tautological remarks. For a moment there developed a delicate balance between the discreditation of the presenters over their fostered Aboriginality and the man's stigmatisation for exposing it, and several of the other participants began to look unhappy. However, the presenters retained their certainty and poise and the flow of the interaction, the man desisted and the moment passed. Overheard conversation after the event suggested that several other participants felt that the questioning was inappropriate, insensitive and self-serving. That is, the questioner himself was subject to some social approbrium. In this instance, the combination of tact and potential embarrassment reversed the usual dynamics that produce shame for the discredited party.

Many people desire the mythic self to be true and look for evidence that will allow them to collude in its realisation. The TAC claim to 'inherit all traditional lands' on the basis of 'Aboriginal law and custom' provides sufficient fuzzy information, appears to be authoritative and to legitimate the claim, and though it can be neither confirmed nor denied it works to allow interactants to avoid analysing the issue further and maybe having to disagree. The information allows audiences to collusively ignore their doubts. Similarly, the housing research above presented sufficient evidence to allow readers to ignore the discrepancies between actual and imagined Aboriginal lives and to accept the latter. In his response to his doubt regarding the Aboriginal self being presented to him above, Shakespeare (2004: 199) chose to tactfully allow the possibility that there really is something

beyond his understanding: 'I looked away, frustrated by my inability to understand'.

The threat of embarrassment for breach of tact produces widespread reluctance to express an opinion other than support for Aboriginal issues. Teachers for example, do not teach Aboriginal Studies for fear of 'appearing racist or insensitive' and/or of 'getting it wrong' (Hollinsworth 1995: 92). The protocols booklet considered above (Everett 2003) builds the threat into the document, mobilising narratives (p. 8) of 'misinterpretation and misinformation' and (p. 17) lack of 'moral integrity' and 'ethical practice' to remind readers of abuses, and raising the threat of the unease one can expect if they are repeated. It (p. 6) proposes the conditions by which 'cultural harmony and goodwill' and 'smoother transactions' can be re-established: 'through best practice methods of interaction and negotiation'. These are not suggestions but (pp. 7, 16, 18, 19) a 'set of expectations' made as of right and without fear of contradiction.

Being beyond critical scrutiny, many Aborigines are likely to 'privilege experience itself, as if [their] ... lived experience [is] outside of representation' (see Hall 1992: 30) and believe their Aboriginality just *is*. Any suggestion that it is socially and politically constituted is an affront, as evident in the following from a politically-active member of the core community:

A MESSAGE:

Pallawah identity cannot be denied any longer. Such attempts will not be tolerated. The Pallawah community has taken control of that right. No longer will questioning of Pallawah identity be permitted. For it is not up to non-Aborigines, be they parliamentary ministers, bureaucrats, public servants, media personnel, teachers or the average person in the street, to determine the terms under which me and mine exist and grow. You cannot take our identity from us whiteman because you didn't give it. Our mothers and fathers of 2000 generations gave us this, and we will carry it with pride and determination, regardless of the persecution and prejudice heaped upon us because we dare to identify as we choose rather than how you dictate. We have a responsibility to our mothers and fathers of the past as well as to our generations of the future to continue the struggle for

our freedom and we will. You cannot change who we are by mere rhetoric for our heritage is stronger and older than your words, written or spoken (Matson-Green 1995: 338).

Though the author is possibly ignorant of the active 'dirty work' (Goffman 1969a: 39) that went into the making of the self in this message, it can work to discomfort critics and make the mythic Aboriginality immune to query and moderation.

Managing insiders: Aboriginal normalisation

Even where the myth is institutionalised and outsider critique controlled, cultural pluralism and subjective multiplicity persists. Aboriginal Tasmanians live their lives in the discursive space constructed by the politics as well as, simultaneously, in the space beyond. They live doubled lives, on the discursive and lived planes, which overlap with shifting/differing degrees of correlation and mis-match. While mythically separate they live integrated lives and while mythically unitary selves they are actually subjectively multiple. These doubled lives cannot be avoided in the conditions produced by the politics in its response to liberal government.

Where these departures become evident they threaten the belief system and sedimented political status quo and push the elite to a fundamentalism and disciplinary control that is typified in a fax (Mansell 31/8/2004) sent from the TAC to members of the core community *plus*. Under the title 'Supremacy of Moral Absolutes or Individual Conscience', Mansell pleads for communal obligation in the face of modern individuality, in order that Aboriginal identity as a 'distinct people' be maintained. He argues that the Catholic church, while facing difficulties associated with modern change, has nevertheless maintained its core values. The church has, he argues, stood strong by limiting the extent to which it accedes to individual tastes and preferences; 'good Catholics' must sacrifice some of those in order to sustain the church and all it stands for. For the church, '[t]he only answer was to impose on its flock a moral absolute: whatever else you do you must maintain your religion according to the rules that have been there for thousands of years'.

He argues that the Aboriginal community must be strong in defence of its own 'moral absolutes', its tradition, wholeness and distinct identity, and that individuals have to sacrifice some of the freedoms and comforts of their modern

lifestyle. He asks, 'should there be this kind of moral absolutism that overrides individual conscience. Put another way, is it "all for one, or one for all?"' He answers the dilemma of balancing individualism and free choice with communal constraint by calling for communitarian loyalty, total identity and a moral absolute which overrides individual conscience. He laments the success of individual Aborigines in terms of employment, education, home ownership and individual freedoms as 'self-defeating':

Without the condition attached that all these individual gains are subordinate to the moral absolute needed to maintain the distinct identity of Aboriginal people, we are actually helping bring about the destruction of our own community. We want a bunch of successful individual Aborigines rather than a successful Aboriginal community made up of individuals.

He compares comfortable middle-class Aborigines who do not contribute to community organisations because 'individual preference overrides any moral absolute', with a prominent Aboriginal lawyer who could have gone on to private wealth and success but has chosen to dedicate her career to 'her people'. He concludes as follows:

Why should the Centre worry about this debate? The answer is because ..., [a]t present our programs are all about individual rights, with an occasional focus on collective rights. Where in our work is any thought of a moral imperative to maintaining a distinct people...? It isn't there. The character and nature of a distinct Aboriginal community was as clear once as was the Catholic church. Is this still the case? ... The church's answer to their dilemma is to maintain their 2,000 year old doctrines that demand compliance while debating the ideas. What will ours be?

This fax represents a demand for commitment to the collective cause. It opposes the ideal Aborigine to the abhorrent selfish individualist middle-class professional who lives in the comfortable suburbs. The good Aboriginal subject is committed to the collective cause, and education and material success compromise commitment. Here, the vision of liberation, fixated on release from white oppression, is of release not into a state of heterogeneous individual

freedom such as the educated middle-class might enjoy. That freedom is something to fear, as it compromises one's Aboriginal integrity. Rather, it is release into an Aboriginal freedom that demands solidarity, unitariness and the relinquishing of that which is shared with the wider world. The fax also hints at a 'set of rules or moral persuasions', in other words disciplinary measures and a conscience with which individuals might self-regulate, which might help achieve this kind of freedom. This is the extremism which post-colonial activists Fanon and Gandhi feared.

The rejection of engagement in Australian society is a consistent theme in the political rhetoric, and is evident in another paper in which Mansell (2003) laments that the movement is in the hands of "programmed" Aborigines and technicians who are poor shadows of the great activists. They are ruled by what is acceptable to middle Australia and so lose interest in the larger struggle. The paper refuses any notion that Aborigines are a part of that middle Australia and can negotiate that position, and instead pleads for the old strategy of 'resistance and making a stand'.

The Aboriginal Provisional Government³⁰ (APG) is built on this fundamentalist strategy. It rejects the 'Australian citizenship' argument based in the notion that 'Aborigines form part of Australian society', arguing that 'the Aboriginal nation ... stands not subordinate to the "Australian nation" but alongside of it' (Mansell n.d.: 3-4). It adopts a position which frames a 'choice' between incommensurable opposites—'Are we Aborigines or Australians?'—and so denies the complexities of pluralism. In fact this sovereignty argument can only work on the condition that Aboriginal Tasmanians form a distinct People, and so it is a cornerstone of the myth. As Mansell says, 'If we are all to be "one people" [Australians] how can Aborigines argue special and separate rights over land forever and ever. We could not have our cake and eat it too' (Mansell n.d.: 4).

Thus the movement in its current identarian form cannot afford for the Aboriginal subject to be other than totalising and uni-dimensional. For Mansell (n.d.: 5) one is either fully an Aborigine or a white Australian and in that case not an Aborigine and 'our enemy'. Accordingly, much political energy is directed at

³⁰ The Aboriginal Provisional Government, initiated in 1990, has called for self-government and proposed a model of sovereignty. It is a national organisation but has been dominated by Michael Mansell. See APG 1992; Ryan 1996: 284-85, 293-94.

keeping the core community *plus* solidly and evidently committed to the mythic Aboriginality. Conformity with expectations, in the form of active socialising within the community, attendance at community meetings, contribution to political rhetoric, eschewal of engagement with the wider society and/or denigration of ‘non-Aboriginal’ behaviours, is positively sanctioned. Those are deemed to be normative Aboriginal behaviours, and they confirm one’s integrity and almost guarantee acceptance in the bosom of the community.

On the other hand, behaviours consistent with cultural pluralism attract suspicion of disloyalty and compromised Aboriginality. Those who pursue independent lives can be seen as equivocal in their loyalty and identity. Some individuals (for instance AA6) may, in their public service jobs, provide service to all Aboriginal clients regardless of their non-acceptance by the TAC. Identifications and behaviours in which Aboriginality is secondary are transgressive and attract negative social sanction. Individuals who display such individual complexity can be met with suspicion, lose status and voice within the community and achieve very guarded acceptance.

This Aboriginal governing normalisation grants social inclusion if individuals identify and behave in normative ways, and limits it if they deviate. It elaborates the polarities of liberal normalisation and amplifies the contradictory pressures to identify as either a marginalised ‘real’ Aborigine or a thinly-Aboriginal citizen. It produces a situation in which individuals can feel that their integrity as Aborigines rests on denial of their other selves, and so validates behaviours that compromise full participation in education or work. This is the point of Noel Pearson’s (2000: 62-3) stance on identity politics:

There is now a tendency for Aboriginal people to be told what their identity should be. There are a lot of prescriptions about what behaviour, work, interests, endeavours, writing, art, poetry, ambitions, dreams, aspirations – are essentially Aboriginal and those that are not. We need to seriously think about the effect of these prescriptions on the possibilities for our children. The autonomy, individuality and creativity of our children should not be stifled by nonsense concepts of “true identity”. Such prescriptions are mostly peddled by people who are uncertain and unconfident about their own identities. Our children

... must be completely confident in their identity and their right to express their identity in the way they choose. It is their values and relationships which bind them to us – not the political or identity straitjackets which are imposed on them.

Pearson's view is that identity politics limit individuals' capacity to manage their mixed lives. His views are based on a recognition that Aboriginal youth 'have desires beyond their circumstances in Cape York', a vision of them 'mov[ing] successfully between both worlds with confidence and complete facility', and the certainty that they must engage in education and economic development to be able to do so (2000: 63-92).

Managing other Aboriginalities: Lia Pootah

The political elite and many of the core community regard others who identify as citizens but nevertheless also as Aborigines as not really Aboriginal and not part of 'the community'. Some of this number are members of the core community who have been ex-communicated on the grounds of non-participation in community affairs. Others have an established biological connection to one of the foundational communities but have little social interaction with other members. Others have been aware through local gossip or family stories of more or less locally-accepted Aboriginal heritage, and still others have recently learned of some form of Aboriginal heritage. The number of people who are Aboriginal in these divergent ways has grown significantly during the 1990s and there are now perhaps 9-10,000 people in this category.³¹ Some of this number have begun to constitute an important challenge to the political status quo dominated by the core community *plus*.

The Lia Pootah community became visible after two court challenges initiated by the political elite, which sought to deny the Aboriginality of many who held positions with ATSIC or organisations funded by ATSIC, and/or sought to vote in ATSIC elections (see Pybus 2000). In the first, in 1996, members of the elite sought to have the Supreme Court declare them to not be Aborigines, but Justice Merkel found that the claimants had not proven that they were not Aborigines and

³¹ Those who desire to substantialise and have their Aboriginality accepted have counterparts who do not actively seek to establish a public Aboriginality, so there is no definitive way to establish this number.

that therefore their positions were valid.³² In the second, in 2002, members of the elite sought to refuse them the right to vote in forthcoming ATSIC elections and hold office, but the Administrative Appeals Tribunal found that ‘on the balance of probabilities’ they were Aboriginal, and could vote and hold office.³³

Taking advantage of their official classification and therefore formal membership of the Aboriginal imagined community, and their legal success, Lia Pootah represents itself as an alternative ancestral line and second Aboriginal Tasmanian nation, claiming to represent the interests of all Aboriginal Tasmanians who are disenfranchised by the TAC’s non-recognition of their Aboriginality.³⁴ In collectively and individually becoming the mythic Aborigine, they employ the same strategic essentialism as that of the core community *plus*. They establish³⁵ their official and communal acceptance in the form of privately-produced family trees, letters of acceptance by known families and schools, membership of ASSPA committees, and by working for and receiving housing from an ATSIC-funded organisation. They argue that their ancestry is evident in family photos of black-looking relatives. They lay claim to the generic Aboriginal cultural heritage, in part through language. Their leading spokesperson, Kaye McPherson, is Tereetee Lore and their organisation, the Southern Traditional Aboriginal Elders Council, is Wallantanalinany Lydidder. They also (see McPherson 1994) refer reverentially to The Ancient Ones, the Ancestors, the Old Ones and talk of the Earth Mother and the Dreaming. They claim to be from an oral culture and to have ‘weather knowledge, fishing knowledge, burning knowledge and weaving knowledge’,³⁶ to be able to smell snakes in the bush, and to practice traditional behaviours such as gathering bush food. They use an elaborate smoking ceremony to cleanse meetings, people, places and books. In one such ceremony, the master of ceremonies held aloft a burning torch from which he blew sparks as he pointed to the compass points and intoned ‘Spirits of the East, Spirits of the North, Spirits of the West, Spirits of the South’ (fieldnotes, 23/5/05). Finally, Lia Pootah claim to be the Aboriginal victim of discrimination, denial and repression at the hands of

³² Federal Court of Australia 1998.

³³ Commonwealth of Australia 2002b.

³⁴ *Four Corners*, ABC TV 26/8/2002; see also Moore 2004.

³⁵ Much of the information here is taken from statements made in Administrative Appeals Tribunal 2002.

³⁶ *Four Corners*, ABC TV 26/8/2002.

both the state and the Aboriginal elite: ‘we are all survivors. We all have had to survive the denial of our existence and who we are, we all had to free ourselves from extinction’ (McPherson 1994).

This is the suite of strategies employed by the core community *plus* in their identity politics. Uniquely though, the Lia Pootah people also claim to ‘be descended from men either convict, free, bushranger or soldier who took Aboriginal women to “wife”’ (McPherson n.d.), and to be now both Aboriginal and white Tasmanian. McPherson identifies with both her Aboriginal and Irish ancestors.³⁷ Lia Pootah publicly celebrate their mixedness, notably over the controversial date and place of celebration of the Bicentenary of the settlement of Tasmania. Consistent with the myth, the TAC mourned the date of the original landing at Risdon Cove as marking the ending of Aboriginal sovereignty and the site of a massacre. Lia Pootah on the other hand, celebrated the occasion on the date and place of the original landing in the company of descendants of Lieutenant Bowen and first settlers. They conducted a ‘healing ceremony’ and celebrated their plural heritage and the mix of friendly interaction and violent clash that had taken place at Risdon Cove.³⁸

Their performance gained Lia Pootah a measure of acceptance for a time. They won their legal cases, were referred to in the media as a ‘tribe’³⁹ and invited to address public meetings, and a senior member of the parliamentary Opposition attended a Lia Pootah event and expressed his support (fieldnotes, 23/5/05). They threatened to attract some of the funding available to the TAC and to take controlling positions on Aboriginal organisations. Mansell (see Pybus 2000: 99) is aware that the Lia Pootah campaign is ‘the most profound political issue facing Tasmanian Aborigines in twenty years’. It threatens the edifice on which the Aboriginal status quo rests. It is dangerous because it explicitly states that *every* Aboriginal person has ‘settler ancestry’, that the Bass Strait Islanders ‘are an amalgam of people ... [who] don’t have a cultural heritage either except an Island heritage’, and that ‘no Aboriginal community ... has stories or dances of their own’.⁴⁰ It exposes the mythicism and normativity of the dominant Aboriginality.

³⁷ *Four Corners*, ABC TV 26/8/2002.

³⁸ *The Saturday Mercury*, 13/9/2003: 5; *The Mercury* 22/7/03: 5.

³⁹ *7.30 Report*, ABC TV 21/8/2002.

⁴⁰ *Four Corners*, ABC TV, 29/8/02.

The Lia Pootah celebration of mixed heritage admits that the boundary between Aborigines and others is permeable.

Many of the pre-eminent core community *plus* feel that Lia Pootah demean the Aboriginality they hold dear by ‘assum[ing] ownership of the hardship, of the denial, of the racism’ that they faced, and their status as *the* Aborigines. The response has been to actively denigrate Lia Pootah’s claimed Aboriginality (and that of others), state that there is ‘not a drop of Aboriginal blood in them’⁴¹ and label them ‘frauds’, ‘imposters’, ‘pretenders’, ‘fakes’, ‘pop-ups’, ‘Johnny-come-lately’ or ‘paper blacks’.⁴² The pretenders make them ‘cringe and crawl’ (Mansell, C. cited in Parliament of Tasmania 2000: 12). The elite have also used the threat posed by the Lia Pootah as another source of solidarity through which to incite others to passionate defence. After Lia Pootah won their case in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal one said, for example:

On Friday October 18, 2002, 130 non-Aborigines invaded the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. Two hundred years ago the whites invaded Aboriginal land by using force and the notion that they know best. In the 21st century they now use the legal system to invade the Aboriginal community ... Mrs Brown [of Lia Pootah] sits on the steps and cries for her children. They will need to continue to fight to be Aborigines accepted by the TAC. Don’t worry, my children will be there fighting too. To keep them out. One hundred and thirty invaders of the 21st Century.⁴³

And on an online forum following a television program focused on the debate about Aboriginality, the following expression of Aboriginal mythology and angst was posted under the name of ‘Ginny’:

These people who have suddenly claimed Aboriginality along with any money earmarked for true Aboriginal people should really take a hard look at themselves and what they are trying to achieve. The motive for all these people suddenly identifying is only for the jobs and opportunities that are available for true Aboriginal people. ... If

⁴¹ Michael Mansell in *Pakana News* 53 (2, August 2002): 17-18; also *The Weekend Australian* 17-18/02/07: Inquirer 19.

⁴² See, for example, *The Sunday Tasmanian* 28/01/01: 1.

⁴³ *The Mercury*, 25/10/02: 16.

you never identified before don't bloody well start now. For God's sake you are giving my people a bad name and are robbing us of a future. Oh wait you whitefella's tried that before and we didn't lay down and let you walk over us. Again we will endure your degradation and contamination of our people. ... Our true people will win in the end, of that I have no doubt. Us fella's have adapted to many changes and we will overcome this challenge as well. Have heart my people for we will survive once again. Anything worth having is worth fighting for.⁴⁴

The political response of the dominant group flirts with danger, because the parallels between the claims of the foundational communities and those of Lia Pootah threaten to expose the weakness of all claims. The Lia Pootah attempt to establish their Aboriginality via a hitherto unknown line of ancestry and essentialist cultural attributes has ultimately failed to convince other Aborigines and the wider public. But as members of the core *plus* try to prove the superiority of their cultural credentials, by pointing for instance to their use of fish traps,⁴⁵ their claims are exposed as not much more substantial and similarly mythical, and their performance of Aboriginality can begin to appear strange. If as Jim Everett said, Kaye McPherson 'is playing with the fairies',⁴⁶ then apart from the fact that they can trace descent, the claims of the core *plus* are liable to be seen in the same light.

Nevertheless, the edifice has been successfully defended and faith in the mythic Aboriginality retained. The state has maintained its support for the established Aboriginal community against the alternatives. It avoided the troublesome Bicentenary date at Risdon Cove and delayed celebrations until September 2004, in Hobart, and has tightened the definition of Aboriginality by reinforcing the need for written genealogical records and placing the onus on the claimant to prove his or her Aboriginality.

⁴⁴ See <http://www2b.abc.net.au/localforum/4corners/20020826/posts/topic424shtm>, 29/8/2002.

⁴⁵ *Four Corners*, ABC TV, 26/8/2002.

⁴⁶ *Four Corners*, ABC TV, 26/8/2002.

Conclusion

This then is the identity politics undertaken by the Aboriginal political elite. It discursively produces an Aboriginal Tasmanian culture and subject as a given, repressed and recovering entity. But that construct is an impossibility for, like the “black” to which Stuart Hall (1987: 45) refers, it ‘has never been just there. ... It has always been an unstable identity, psychically, culturally and politically. It ... is a narrative, a story, a history. Something constructed, told, spoken, not simply found.’

The politics lays a mythic veneer over the lived reality of intercultural Aboriginal and other social experiences and identities that always exceed the myth. Because the veneer reprises the ‘undifferentiated identity categories’ (Parry 1987: 29) and binaries, and amplifies the normalising pressures to be either real, totally, or *not* Aboriginal, it is forever inadequate to the lived reality, liable to discreditation and in need of defence. It produces conditions that consign individuals to Bhabha’s hither and thither between myth and reality and leaves them less room for manoeuvre than is available under liberal governance. This is the unsettling burden bequeathed by the politics, in its response to progressive governance, to Aborigines. The following chapters examine how individuals grapple with the complexities of negotiating their Aboriginality in these conditions.

Chapter 6 The burden of Aboriginality for Aborigines

Introduction

Previous chapters have described the discursive creation of a mythic Aboriginality as an ideal type, opposed to an equally valorised normal citizenship, and its authoritative overlay on a lived reality of interculturality and subjective multiplicity. Chapter Four considered one dimension of this creation and overlay through progressive policy intervention and mundane social government in education, which tells Aboriginal Tasmanians that they cannot be both authentically Aboriginal and full citizens. Chapter Five demonstrated how and why the Aboriginal identity politics adopts this Aboriginal culture and subject, refuses ambiguity and presses Aborigines to be Aboriginal in the authorised way or to be not really Aboriginal at all. The suggestion has been that a dialectic of these governing mentalities constructs the mythic Aboriginality that dominates Aborigines' lived reality of reasonably facile negotiation of the small differences that separate them from other citizens, and that the pressures to identify and perform according to the dictates of the dialectic make their lives more difficult than they may otherwise be.

Chapter Six explores the dynamics and consequences of that suggestion in more depth. It explains how the dialectic motivates many Aborigines to enact the authoritative narrative of Aboriginality in a comprehensive masquerade, but in doing so, creates a troublesome reality in the image of the story. Though Goffman (1969a) recognises that masquerade (or in his terms "passing") is a normal and usually unproblematic part of the routine negotiation of the complexity of everyday sociality, in the Aboriginal Tasmanian case the social dynamics are productive of complexity as highly problematic. In seeking to either realise the mythic culture and become the mythic subject, or to obfuscate and protect their on-going errant hybridity, the masquerade has Aboriginal individuals compromise their capacities to negotiate the dissonances that arise between their different subject positions in the everyday. The widespread performance has debilitating consequences, being energy-sapping, subjectively wearing and materially self-marginalising. In effect, the chapter establishes the troublesome power of the *story* of Aboriginality.

Aboriginal lop-sided realities

The logic of progressive Aboriginal governance is that the contemporary Aboriginal condition is in large part the legacy of British colonisation and the historical and continuing ethnocentrism of mainstream institutions, and that contemporary policy intervention can repair that injustice by rendering government services more culturally sensitive and by supporting the recovery of Aboriginal cultural integrity and individual self-esteem. In that project, public policy discursively constructs Aboriginal culture as originary, bounded, internally homogeneous and irreducibly different from that of the nation and the West in general, and the Aboriginal self as unitarily Aboriginal. As a result, it is very difficult for an Aborigine to be both Aboriginal and a modern citizen, though it is possible to be included on the condition that the difference is moderated so as to be not repugnant to the wider society (not taking child brides for example; see Povinelli 2002) and that the remaining difference is equated with being marginal rather than equal citizen-subjects. The less exotic are considered too uncannily like 'us' to warrant consideration as really different (see Povinelli 2002: 170) and therefore amenable to normalising intervention. The dilemma for Aboriginal Tasmanians is that such supposedly compromised Aboriginality is an illegitimate form, and so they can apparently only be accepted as Aborigines at the expense of their sense of Aboriginality. This constitutes the drive to resist ambiguity and establish cultural credentials.

Aboriginal politics has found it politically useful to adopt the liberal conceptions and logic in virtually their entirety. It has adopted and elaborated the originary culture, the unitary metonymic self, the logic of assimilation, Aboriginal victimhood and liberation through recovery of culture and self. With the sole departure of an underpinning negative representation of whiteness, the politics reinscribes the power of the binary choice between Aboriginality and Australianness, and therefore negatively sanctions engagement with the wider world as assimilation and furiously denies any notion of plurality or hybridity.¹

¹ In *The Saturday Mercury* (14/9/2002: 37-8), Henry Reynolds suggested that the Tasmanians could be thought of as having a distinct but creole, not purely Aboriginal culture, like the Canadian Métis. Michael Mansell (*The Mercury* 17/9/2002: 9) is reported to have rejected the suggestion as 'outrageous' and 'ethnocentric'. Also see Rolls (2005) for a response.

The question asked by the leader of the Aboriginal political movement is the exclusivist ‘Are you Aborigine or Australian?’ (Mansell n.d.; see also 31/8/2004).

The dialectic of these governmentalities confects an identity conundrum for Aborigines that they actually negotiate with some facility in their daily lives. It constitutes a hegemonic discourse that pressures individuals to make a choice to *either* approximate the mythic Aboriginal subject and accept as the cost some marginalisation *or* seek full social inclusion at the cost of an inconsequential Aboriginality. That discourse employs conceptually easy but theoretically inadequate² notions of culture, identity, power and historical cause which have it that any transgression of the boundaries those notions establish, in the form of participation in the wider society or identification with values or practices nominally outside them, compromises Aboriginality. Participation or identification amounts, that is, to assimilation. The denigration of the hybrid as an abhorrent in-between or non-identity increases the pressure and the motivation to choose one or the other (see McDonald 1999: 180-201).

The notion of Aboriginal difference is in some senses true. As Aboriginal Tasmanians Wendy Aitken (2008: 95) and Rodney Dillon (2008: 145) indicate in their contributions to a new (Johnston and Rolls 2008) interpretation of the colonial period in Tasmania, Aborigines share the narrative of the mythic Aboriginality and a consciousness as Aborigines.³ Also, Aboriginal Tasmanians constitute a marginalised category of the population. But the actual differences between individuals are minor, in the way that differences of gender, sexuality, age or ethno-religion (see Ignatieff 1997: 35-40; Sen 2006) are minor in comparison to what they share with others, especially compatriots, and are by no means insurmountable, as the history of these peoples’ own forebears’ nineteenth-century reconciliations in truly oppressive circumstances suggest.⁴ Neither the

² Baumann (1996: 16, 24-25) argues that conceptual simplicity is one of the features that explains the attraction of the hegemonic discourse in this field.

³ Basil Sansom (1981) argues that Aboriginal cultures share a continental commonality and (1981: 135) a ‘parathetic relationship to mainstream Australian society ... the relating of distinct cultures’, as if they do not interpenetrate and agentic individuals are not involved. This thesis presents evidence that this is not the case in Tasmania in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and following Tyler (1994) and others (Gelder and Jacobs 1995; Tonkinson 1999; Pearson 2000; Sutton 2001), argues that it is increasingly not the case in remote Australia either, with growing mobility, media reach, commercial activity and integration in the wider world.

⁴ Russell (2007) argues that William Lanney negotiated his life, representing the last of the tribal Tasmanians at Oyster Cove and participating in the colonial commercial world, with agency (see

imagined state-wide nor local Aboriginal communities are solidary or discrete as the myth would have it. Most families are biologically mixed (see Gray 1998: 13; Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 1999a: 45-48; Birrell 2000; Gardiner and Bourke 2000; Birrell and Hirst 2002), geographically dispersed (ABS 1998; 2008: 20) and socially and culturally integrated within the wider community. Individuals belong to and identify with multiple categoric groupings, including those of Aboriginal and settler Tasmania and Australia.⁵

The colonial ‘*articulating world of difference*’ (Bhabha 1990: 213, original emphasis) produced new meanings and hybrid constructions like mutton-birding, music,⁶ food⁷ and identities.⁸ The process of enunciation that produced those cultural features continues in the contemporary ‘social heteroglossia’ (Bakhtin 1981: 67, 264, 272-73) of, to recall examples from preceding chapters, sporting participation, mainstream employment, state, federal and international politics, school and tertiary study, home and other investment and engagement in cosmopolitan lives. As children, young people and adults, Aboriginal Tasmanians socialise in mixed groups on the basis of shared interests that often do not involve Aboriginality. Even those from the most politically-aware and culturally-conformist sections of the core community exist in this ‘living hermeneutics’ (Bakhtin 1981: 338), in which what Aboriginal and settler-Australian others have to say about them is important to them, and so they have multiple loyalties and identities that are, in the terms of the discourse (and eventually coming to have a

also Ryan 1996: 214); Birmingham (1992) reveals some forms of accommodation to the regime at Wybalenna, and a letter from the heads of the families in the Bass Strait Islands (TAC/ALCT 2004: 9-10) suggests that they had come to a workable resolution of circumstances not of their own making.

⁵ This integration is considered in the Introduction to the thesis. As an example, a secretary of the TAC, Sara Maynard says (*The Mercury Magazine* 2/9/06: 2) that she loves chocolate, wine, coffee, high heels, dressing up, rugby union, boxing and ‘chilling out with some good blues music’.

⁶ One edition of *pakana news* (2003 53-2, Aug.: 26) reports ‘an afternoon of music, laughter, dancing and telling stories, and a feed of curried and baked mutton birds ... Ronnie played the guitar and sang requests, Merinda ... play[ed] the fiddle, Marion sang country songs and played her guitar. Amy and Marion led the dancing around the lawn, Marie joined in with her unique tap-dancing jig followed by Rocky and Roseann. Erica and Winnie waltzed till they dropped and Rachel joined in with the hula. The sun shone and there was plenty of laughter coo-ing, clapping and stories about the Brown Brothers’ music and the dances the elders had gone to on the islands’.

⁷ Damper and wallaby stew often features in family and community gatherings, such as the one in note 6 above or NAIDOC Week events.

⁸ The Bass Strait Islanders knew themselves and were known by others as Straitsmen or Islanders. Wendy Aitken says for instance, that her ‘grandmother ... would describe herself as the daughter of a Straitsman’ (*Launceston Examiner* 11/7/2005: 15).

truth in reality), incongruous, inconsistent and contradictory. Aboriginal Tasmanian selfhood actually includes various Aboriginal, Australian and other identifications, each of which is partial, conditioned by the others and waxes and wanes in priority according to context. Thus, Aboriginal Tasmanians actually simultaneously belong to, and differentiate themselves within, a great many categories, groups and roles that have been made at the least unconventional, at worst transgressive and always problematic. Some examples among many include parliamentarian, lawyer, supporter of native forestry, pop singer, fashion model, opera singer and middle-class businessman.⁹

Aboriginal Tasmanians are arguably, partly through progressive public policy measures, no longer subject to state oppression. Also partly as a result of such measures, and partly as an emergent accomplishment of their negotiation of social heteroglossia, they are creatively agentic. As is evident in the sophistication of their politics, they understand as native speakers the subtleties of the languages, cultural references, meanings, norms and conventions of the ‘dialogically interrelated’ Aboriginal, settler-Australian and global worlds that ‘know about each other (just as two exchanges in a dialogue know of each other and are structured in this mutual knowledge of each other)’ (Bakhtin 1981: 324). As do other people (see for example Baumann 1996; Noble *et al.* 1999), they take account of and negotiate the gender, sexual, socio-economic, age, religious and ethnic differences that saturate their everyday worlds. The coexistence of difference and similitude in those interanimating worlds evidently stymies neither interaction nor common cause.

Nevertheless, the dialectic of progressive policy and Aboriginal politics institutionalises a hegemonic discourse that fixes meanings and denies the lived realities of that social experience and the diverse Aboriginalities continuously being generated and/or enunciated in it. The discourse re-tells histories (including a recanting on earlier reconciliations of difference and emergent identities),

⁹ See, respectively, Purcell (2002) and *National Indigenous Times* 28/8/2002: 19; *Law Institute Journal* 2007, August; *The Saturday Mercury* 2/10/2004: 15; *The Mercury Magazine* 4/12/2004: 5; *Vogue Australia* Vol. XLVII: 64-5; *The Weekend Australian*, 16-17/9/2006: 11; *The Eye* 27/1-9/3/2000. These examples are not exclusively Tasmanian. Though the stress in the text in this chapter is on Aboriginal Tasmanians, I argue in the concluding chapter that the dynamics in Tasmania are representative of national dynamics, and these and other examples cited elsewhere in the chapter are taken from Tasmania and the mainland to suggest this parallel.

proposes a primordial and constitutionally distinct people, culture and self, stifles internal growth and heterogeneity, exaggerates external otherness and minimises that which is shared with settler-Australians. It characterises those who do otherwise as neither one nor the other (see Bhabha 1994: 219) and so, impossibly, prohibits the commonplace of double (actually multiple) consciousness.

Overlaid for governing purposes on contrary lived realities, this discursive reality constitutes an ‘unhomely’ (Bhabha 1994: 9-10, 12-15) lop-sidedness of realities. Though in Tasmania as in the UK (see Baumann 1996), deeply contradictory of every individual’s actual demotic negotiation of their ambiguous state of fluid difference/sameness, and their enunciation of hybrid selves out of that negotiation, the mythical reality is institutionalised. It is a hegemonic discourse, and is so because of its conceptual simplicity and its serviceability to both state and Aboriginal power-brokers on the basis of its communicative monopoly, flexibility of application and ideological plasticity (Baumann 1996: 22, 30). As such, the hegemonic expectations of idealised behaviour, thought and self-perception authoritatively (see Bakhtin 1981: 343) refuse the liberating possibilities of their ability to negotiate their sameness/difference with settler-Tasmanians and sameness/difference from each other. This asymmetrical prevalence of imagined reality is a blight on Aboriginal Tasmanians’ lives.

The Aboriginal masquerade

These are the structures that individuals confront and must negotiate. The mythical Aboriginal subject pulls, as an ideal type, with a centrifugal force, as the Lia Pootah confusion demonstrates. It is institutionally-embedded, widely accepted and seems to offer ontological security. The governing pressures of Aboriginal and state interests make it a difficult subject position to contravene (by being culturally and subjectively multiple) without losing connection and credibility with Aboriginal and mainstream communities. Several students in this study indicated that they intended to explore their Aboriginality in more depth at a later date, and the choices adults make suggest that the pressures to decide one way or the other build with time. Thus, many come to choose to negotiate the circumstances by adopting a comprehensive life-long masquerade of the mythic

Aboriginality, which, like the masquerade of femaleness (Butler 1999: 60), must be a sufficiently compelling ‘appearing’ to ‘make itself convincing as a “being”’.

Of those who adopt the masquerade, the behaviour of some, like the students in the alternative education unit, many of the core community (like AA3, AA4) and others (AA1), indicates that they imagine themselves as, and live a comprehensive performance of, the mythic Aboriginality. They replicate the expressions of exotic culture, unitary selfhood, irreducible difference and resistant victimhood of the collective politics. They live with the dissonance of cultures, lives and selves that lie outside and shadow that performance, but these they sublate beneath the surface of the masquerade. As is argued below, many believe that the mythic self is their real, though denied or suppressed self, which they have not yet been able to realise as a result of the actions of mainstream society and state. Others (like AA2 or AA6), perhaps with a more dialogised awareness, perform the ideal-typical Aboriginality as a façade behind which to protect their simultaneous multiplex cultural affiliations and selves—their Aboriginality and Australianness for instance—from the intervention of state or Aboriginal governing interests. This second group of people adopt the masquerade as a means to the end of maintaining their lived reality.

For both groups, the decision implies a life of simulation and dissimulation. It is to stage a simulation (Baudrillard 1983, 1994, 1998) or hyperreal (Eco 1986) Aboriginality that bears little resemblance to historical or current realities, but assumes a reality and becomes real in its consequences. With their varying intentions, individuals replicate the political discourse by enacting stylized versions of the personal style, ways of being, identifying, behaving, speaking, moving and dressing of the imagined mythic Aborigine, and de-emphasise, camouflage or otherwise mis-represent their personal departures from it and from other Aborigines, their similarities to settler-Australians and others, their actual subjective multiplicity and their ability to negotiate that multiplicity.

In the masquerade, individuals play corroboree music,¹⁰ wear wallaby skin cloaks,¹¹ ‘cook muttonbirds in the traditional style’,¹² hold smoking ceremonies

¹⁰ In November 1976, Michael Mansell initiated a land rights march by playing ‘a tape of Aboriginal corroboree music before setting out the reasons for the march’ (TAC/ALCT 2004: 17).

¹¹ *The Saturday Mercury* 13/9/2003: 5.

¹² *The Sunday Tasmanian* 9/5/2004: 52.

(fieldnotes, 23/5/2005), refer to Mother Earth (Everett 1997a; 2000), claim innate connection to,¹³ knowledge of, and care for the physical environment,¹⁴ express reverence for elders and ancestors (as above) and proclaim their obligations to extended family and kin. Some (AA4, 16/8/02) go north for periods,¹⁵ while others (AA1, 12/7/02) spend years of their lives in northern Australia trying to ‘reconnect’ with their Aboriginality. Others imitate the naming practices of central desert Aborigines or (fieldnotes, 18/7/03) mimic vernacular language, as in asking a visiting Aboriginal media personality, ‘What country you from bro?’.¹⁶

They distinguish themselves from other Tasmanians by claiming a minor indigenous heritage as a totalising identity and dismissing their far larger European family heritage as ‘just mongrel’ (see Shakespeare 2004: 199) or saying that ‘being like white people is what Tasmanian Aborigines are trying hardest not to do’.¹⁷ The struggling victim-of-oppression persona, used as a resource to negotiate social life, is performed in commonplace references to ‘the legacies of colonialism’, ‘the ongoing power relationships embedded in neo-colonialism,’¹⁸ and claims that ‘we should not have to pay uni fees in compensation for colonial dispossession’ (pers. comm., 2/8/06) and that ‘Reconciliation has resulted in an oppression much like the conciliation of George Augustus Robinson’ (Lehman 2005: 4). Aboriginal Tasmanians are reported to be ‘insulted’ about proposed flag raising ceremonies,¹⁹ ‘outraged’ by not being consulted about forestry operations²⁰ or scientific tests on their ancestors’ remains,²¹ and ‘isolated’ and ‘alienated’ by a school curriculum that is failing them.²²

The power of the discourse (as political rhetoric and personal performance) results in the alternative education unit, in seeking to respond to the key interests

¹³ *The Saturday Mercury* 30/10/2003: 7.

¹⁴ *Four Corners*, ABC TV, 26/8/2002.

¹⁵ Apart from the interviewee for this project noted here, Aboriginal sportswoman Cathy Freeman and actor Deborah Mailman did the same ‘journey of self-discovery’ [sic] through north-western Australia; see *The Weekend Australian* 28-29/1/2006: 7.

¹⁶ This is a reference to the aforementioned Errol Tjapanangka West and Vicky maikutena Matson-Green, but many others have adopted the same practice.

¹⁷ Jim Everett, letter to the editor, *The Mercury*, 12/11/2004: 18.

¹⁸ ‘Request for contributions for an indigenous geographies publication’, email to staff of Riawunna, 21/11/2003.

¹⁹ *The Mercury* 15/11/2002: 19.

²⁰ *The Sunday Tasmanian* 29/9/2002: 7.

²¹ *The Mercury* 16/1/2007: 7.

²² Mansell, reported in *The Mercury*, 20/2/2003: 21.

of its student cohort, building much of its curriculum around Aboriginal prisoners and their prison experience (fieldnotes, April-May 2002). Resistance is equated with freedom, the struggle and being true to one's Aboriginality, and so Aboriginal truants regard their truancy and street people their disregard for norms of public behaviour as expressions of Aboriginality.²³ Being the victim entails blaming the colonisers, their descendants, the state and white society for the Aboriginal situation. Thus for example, some Aboriginal parents (pers. comm., 8/5/02) blame schools and teachers for poorer educational outcomes, saying that the demand for disciplined abstract learning is excessive and discriminatory, and though it is also performed in accord with Aboriginal social pressure, academics (Anderson 2003a: 44) criticise the social sciences for 'sentenc[ing indigenes] to the imaginary twilight zone of the distant, exotic and backward past'.²⁴

Because Aborigines are individuals though, and not simply cultural avatars, the masquerade also involves active *dissimulation* to obfuscate the other affiliations, loyalties and selves that actually coexist with and are part of that Aboriginality and comprise alternative selfhoods that deny the thorough differentness and unitariness of the simulation Aboriginality. Both those who wish to *be* the orthodox Aborigine and those who wish to provide space to be, following Ang *et al.* (2000), *alter*-Aboriginal, perform an Aboriginality that allows them to elide their belonging-ness to multiple groups, particularly those that include dichotomous aspects of the white Other like middle-classness, intellectuality or aesthetic sophistication. Thus, de-emphasis, occlusion or other obfuscation of the affiliations and identity positions associated with social and cultural mixedness is an integral part of the masquerade.

Comprehensive immersion in authoritative discourse (see Bakhtin 1981: 33) and protracted performance can convince individuals that they are the simulation Aborigine and can realise that self socially, but in the face of continuing contradictory real-world evidence, across multiple audiences and over an extended period, the potential for unmasking is omnipresent. The masquerade demands a nuanced performance that, though a product of the drive to govern by simplifying

²³ This interpretation is based in part on the response of a well-known member of the core community to my suggestion that the state sets the rules and normalises him and his mates; his reply was that he makes his own rules.

²⁴ See also Koori Consultants 1996 for a similar externalisation of cause.

lived complexity, makes that normal human complexity more problematic. The Aboriginal audience is dominated by the core community *plus* and demands a consistent and blatant loyalty, and for that audience, individuals highlight their credentials as loyal members of the community and de-emphasise compromising other loyalties. They do so through criticism of national and/or state government, participation in community events and by explicitly making other commitments, loyalties and affiliations secondary. This may mean disclaiming material wealth, educational interest or social mobility, or making themselves, their skills and resources available to the community. Performative proof is particularly important for the members of the Dolly Dalrymple-Briggs (DD-B) and Fanny Cochrane-Smith (FC-S) communities who have proof of descent from pre-colonial Aboriginal people but discontinuous cultural attachment, but this avenue is not easily available to those disconnected from these communities.

The contemporary mainstream audience on this issue is dominated by progressives, who recognise human and indigenous rights and seek a more free and just society. As in respect of the ‘Black community’ in the UK, this audience often conceives of reified cultures, discrete communities, romantic otherness and victimhood at the hands of ‘the oppression thought inherent in a reified “white culture”’ (Baumann 1996: 24). As is suggested by the response²⁵ to Keith Windschuttle’s (2002) defence, as he saw it, of ‘the integrity of the nation itself and the civilisation from which it is derived’,²⁶ members of this audience accept much of the criticism of the Western, and certainly colonial, world. And as Chapter Four suggests, their orientation to the dominant discourse (see Bakhtin 1981: 278-79) means that many accept the mystifications, want Aborigines to overcome the structural impediments to their recovery of culture and identity and believe that “‘ethnic targeting”’ of social services, preservation ‘of “culture” and ... right to difference’ (Baumann 1996: 25) are appropriate policy directions.

²⁵ That response was an outpouring of scholarly work (for example Boyce 2004; Manne 2003 and the contributions to his 2003 edited collection; Karskens *et al.* 2003), print and television journalism and local and national commentary (for example *The Weekend Australian* 28-29/12/2002: Inquirer 11, 15-17; *The Weekend Australian* 30-31/8/2003, Inquirer: 19; *Quadrant* 2004, Mar.; *Island Magazine* 96) and several public debates. Much of the response tended toward an ideological defence of the orthodox progressive interpretation of Aboriginal history without (see Boyce 2003: 11) a clear focus on the quality of Windschuttle’s scholarship.

²⁶ *National Indigenous Times* 19/2/2003: 8.

Many who participated in the events considered in the preceding chapter, including the launch of new books, art exhibitions and installations, NAIDOC Week celebration and cultural training program, were community service workers, academics, administrators and social justice activists. It was a senior lecturer at the University of Tasmania for example, who opened a book launch by enthusiastically introducing as a ‘great Tasmanian Aborigine, a great interpreter of the Aboriginal tradition’ (fieldnotes, 11/9/2003), a man who claimed that the voice of Ida West and Tasmanian Aboriginal culture itself exists ‘in the wind, in the birds’. It was a social science academic and a member of The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (pers. comm., 11/9/03) who agreed that this indicated his Aboriginal spirituality. And it was another lecturer at the university who, after attending the cultural training program (pers. comm., 4/11/2004), seriously considered the possibility of special consideration for Aboriginal Tasmanian orality in tertiary essays and exams.

Aborigines are aware of this apperceptive background (see Bakhtin 1981: 280-81, 344-47) and so perform the appropriate exotic difference, in the form of smoking ceremonies, expressions of reverence for ‘The Old People’ (AA2, 27/9/2002; AA4, 16/8/2002) and hunting and gathering activities.²⁷ They claim a particular kinship and social structure, that ‘the land is part of us’, that we are not from Western culture and are ‘marginalised because we are the Other and we don’t fit’.²⁸ Such claims are deployed in the knowledge that, through the influence of the hegemonic discourse, kinship will be interpreted as the intricate kinship systems of central Australia, cultural protocols as traditional, and national health statistics as representative of the health status of the Tasmanians.²⁹

The mainstream audience is not of course homogeneous, and includes conservatives, neo-liberals and more critical and well-informed progressives, any of whom may question the performance. As in the situation of the cultural safety program, actors avoid exposure of their performance *as* performance by obfuscating within the terms of the mythology. When asked for more detail about rituals, norms and customs, the presenter of the aforementioned program responded by suggesting that, if one wished to work with Aborigines one must be

²⁷ Rodney Dillon takes abalone in order to perpetuate his culture; see also notes 10-16 above.

²⁸ Statement by Jim Everett in the cultural training program, 4/11/2004.

²⁹ See the housing policy research in Chapter Five.

introduced to them by a community member and that, for example, she herself would be better able to work with the community by virtue of being a known person. When asked to explain the taboos to which she had referred she replied, ‘When I am asked that question, I say “I’m not telling you, that’s the message”’. When asked how to recognise Aborigines, and for more detail about reciprocal obligations, she answered respectively, ‘It’s pretty easy ... names like Mansell, Maynard’, and ‘I don’t work as an individual in my community’. Her tautology managed the threat of exposure which existed had she been asked for empirical evidence of kinship, cultural protocols, community cohesion or respect for elders. It is similar to the earlier confounding ‘that’s mongrel’ comment of Shakespeare’s (2004: 199) interlocutor.

This impenetrability manages some of the shortcomings of the masquerade, and is itself woven into the performance as evidence of an indefinable quality beyond rationalist white comprehension. It is often acceptable to progressives who, as suggested by some who commented after the cultural training program for example (pers. comm., 4/11/2004), prefer to trust rather than contest the *prima facie* evidence, despite misgivings. Mythologising confounds analysis of discrepancies between the imagined and lived Aboriginality, and allows the former to prevail in audience members’ consciousness. Where there is lingering doubt, the exhibition of mythicised traits such as knowledge of the bush, evidence of injustice, artistic or even sporting skill can convince them of continuing essential Aboriginality³⁰ and make multiplicity and hybridity somewhat acceptable.

Though progressive audiences may be willing to be convinced by the performance, they also have certain expectations that require a subtle version of the performed Aboriginality.³¹ Observation and reflection with teachers and others over the course of this research suggests for example, that they expect Aborigines to be different but not too different, victims but neither too passive nor too stridently oppositional as in, as a teacher said, having a ‘chip on their shoulder’

³⁰ Such signs can be interpreted, like ‘Africanisms’ (Yelvington 2001: 228-32), and particularly where culture is reified, as surviving traces of essential culture and proof of continuing culture, despite outward change. Here, the expectation that that interpretation will be made is manipulated.

³¹ This conclusion is based on accumulated observations of teacher’s and other’s behaviours, their comments to me, staff-room and other conversations, documents, letters to the editor and the relevant research literature.

(pers. comm., 23/8/001). Teachers and others tend to accept the logic that Aborigines' contemporary marginalisation, dysfunction and anti-social behaviour is a consequence of injustice, but also want to see them actively working to overcome their situation and doing so in a reasonable and good-humoured way. Those who manage to be proud but also good-natured are lauded (pers. comm., 23/8/01). The desired sort of agency is within the norms of public dissent, not cynical political manipulation.

These perceptions and expectations demand some refinement of the performance staged for an Aboriginal audience. They demand a real *and* domesticated Aborigine, a unitary *and* plural self, evidence of the romantic past *and* the modern present, and very delicately-judged agency. The very sophistication of strategic self-presentation that Aborigines must have in order to master the masquerade, in itself proof of their native integration in wider worlds, must never be evident, but hidden beneath a naivety that, though partially postured, must be taken as natural. The masquerade would be shattered were it to be known as a performance, and so actors must modify it to suggest their pragmatic capacity to simulate bothness without it affecting their continuing Aboriginality. Thus in public debate they may appear to be responsive to rational argument by distancing themselves from claims of 'massacres' and instead claiming 'tragedies'; they may also limit their criticism to colonial society and so distance that criticism from the present. Or in their roles as teachers, public servants, office managers or parks rangers, they may highlight their efficiency or their objectivity in matters Aboriginal, as in not accommodating demands made on them by others of the Aboriginal community. As parents, they may agree with the need for their children to commit more fully to education.

This double masquerade and its difficulties are considered again below, but it is also difficult because, while it may satisfy the demands of the progressive audience, it can compromise others' perception of their Aboriginality, and even if nicely modulated for the different audiences, there is a danger of inconsistency across audiences. In the small Tasmanian social world each individual's competing memberships and more complex selves are actually known, and so it is always possible for comparison to expose the existence of different masks which might discredit the individuals involved. A common strategy is to keep the

Aboriginal and professional audiences as separate as possible and play the different selves to each. Those in the professions adopt the Aboriginal mask for their community audience and, since it is known that their Aboriginality is not absolutely exclusive, play it as their prime self and their professional and other selves as very much secondary. As observed, they dress down, reveal otherwise hidden tattoos, mimic vernacular language, swear a little more and stress their family's history of commitment to the struggle. They signify their solidarity by agreeing with the movement's criticisms of the white world, mocking that world as 'a pack of dickheads' (pers. comm., 13/11/1996) or supporting demands for the exclusive employment of Aborigines in their organisation.

In their professional contexts on the other hand, they establish a more nuanced 'professional-Aboriginal' persona. They may continue to signify their Aboriginality, but represent it as not compromising their commitment to professional ethics and norms such as objectivity of decision-making and accountability. They may reveal their personal loyalties to other groups and interests (like football teams or cult TV shows) that very marginally trouble the Aboriginal. They may replace the vernacular with more educated language, hide the tattoos, dress in more formal or fashionable manner, emphasise their bourgeois taste and etiquette and indicate their equality by a more rational and critical approach to Aboriginal affairs. They may even consider thoughtful critique of policies of affirmative action such as the Aboriginalisation of staffing. This is presented to their Aboriginal audience as a pragmatic performance to suit the demands of the white world that, like Tully's (1995: 24-29) *Haida Gwaii*, or Durie's (1995: 34) Maori dipping into Pakeha culture, has no impact on their ineluctable indigenous self.

Where the role disparities become too pronounced and too difficult to manage, some workers feel that they have to leave their jobs and some educated young people (for instance Tara, AA9, 22/11/2002) who hold decentred notions of self, put some distance between themselves and their essentialist families. Where that course is not taken, constant character switching to suit separated audiences inevitably leads to occasional inappropriate performances, as it did for one junior female academic (pers. comm., 25/5/2005). When meeting with an exclusively Aboriginal audience to discuss Aboriginal community issues, she was asked

where she was from, and instead of replying that she was from one of the foundational families or some other identifier appropriate to the context, she replied 'I'm from the Art School'. She was embarrassed to find that she had replied in her role as art academic, as if to a member of the arts community, rather than as an Aborigine. By revealing that her selfhood was comprised of several identity positions and that one other than her Aboriginality was occasionally primary, she had with that audience qualified the totality of her Aboriginality, opened that notion to be seen as fiction and diminished her credibility.

Where audiences intersect, the masquerade is therefore performed for multiple inter-illuminating and dialogising audiences (Bakhtin 1981: xxiv, 7, 283-85, 426-27). Such intersection occurs in real time and space or when audiences discuss a performance after the event, or as it becomes available to others via the mass media, and can be greatly troubling where an individual has previously presented different selves to different components of the larger audience (see Goffman 1969a). In this situation, individuals have to present an impression of self to one part of the audience while cognisant of and seeking to manage the impression being made on other parts of the audience. This is a common situation and so the Aboriginal self can be thought of as a self 'with a sideways glance' (see Bakhtin 1981), to be done with caution.

In this situation, the routine negotiation of intersecting roles that Goffman has shown is basic to everyone's negotiation of social life is added to by the need to negotiate the discrepancies between the selves of the masquerade and lived reality, and made yet more difficult by the constriction of the range of identity options made available by the hegemonic discourse. The discourse, similar to that facing black migrants in Britain (see Baumann 1996), constricts Aboriginal Tasmanians in their capacity to successfully manage the masquerade, but through their immersion in the everyday dialogising heteroglossia they know the liberal and Aboriginal worlds as natives, and this familiarity helps them to work the necessary identity sleights of hand. The native feel for liberal sensibilities is suggested by some participants' comments after the cultural training program, to the effect that the program had constructed an 'emotional bubble' by its manipulation of the pain of dispossession and the journey of 'healing', plus references to the holocaust and apartheid (pers. comm., 4/11/2004).

This native feel for their audiences' apperceptive backgrounds, the outcome of life-long integration, is critical to the polysemous capacity needed to achieve the illusion of singularity with mixed audiences. It allows actors to oscillate between their "stock" of overlapping ethnic [and other] allegiances' (Kalka, cited in Baumann 1996: 26), shoring up each as needed, blurring the small contradictions and fluidly slipping between categories, manipulating the denotative and connotative levels of communication to control the inflections of meaning each listener/reader will infer, and seeking to do so invisibly. In Tasmania the slippages and boundary crossings may be between the local, Tasmanian and Australian Aboriginalities and global indigeneity, or local mixed community, larger imagined Aboriginal and national communities. Such negotiation of conceptual vagueness, say of *our*, *my*, *the* or *The Community* can have several variant meanings in play simultaneously without compromising each other, and are used to reinforce claims made on the basis of any single or any mix of the various allegiances. In Tasmania for instance, core family names confirm lineage and political status with both main audiences and are for the TAC sufficient basis to claim legal aid, as against others.³² Two instances suggest the fundamental importance of this otherwise routine task, which becomes extremely delicate for Aborigines caught in the masquerade.

In the first case (pers. comm., 12/8/2003) an individual in an identified position³³ in the public sector was caught between totalising positions and unable to negotiate their intersection. Individuals in identified positions often have obligations to the wider imagined and/or their particular local Aboriginal community that clash with those to the organisation, and indicate to each party that the self appropriate to that party is their priority. In this case, a manager of an organisation providing service for a mixed clientele had, in her management of recruitment and employment practices, thus far separated the audiences and committed herself to different positions with regard to each: to the Aboriginal community she had committed to their position that all relevant positions should be filled by Aborigines, while to the organisation she had committed to the

³² The TAC accepts such family names as sufficient evidence for receipt of Aboriginal Legal Aid (Mansell 26/7/99).

³³ These positions are legislatively restricted to Australian indigenous people and are a feature of employment practices in the government sector.

employment of Aboriginal staff on merit. When Aboriginal community representatives and staff met at a social event, she was caught in a discussion of the issue and unable to finesse the discrepancy. The choice facing her was stark, to either take the totalising Aboriginal line or the pluralist organisational line, but either way she was unmasked and since her identity as an Aborigine and her future career depended on community acceptance, she felt she had to commit to the community line. This was to surrender a measure of her individual agency to political interests, but had she chosen the latter, the appearance of unitary Aboriginality would have crumbled and she would have suffered some form of social sanction.

In the second case, though possessed of sublime skills in this negotiation of masquerade, an Aboriginal man was nonetheless unmasked. The incident occurred subsequent to the publication of Windschuttle's (2002) attempt to overturn the dominant interpretation of Tasmania's Aboriginal history,³⁴ at the time of the bicentenary of the establishment of the colony in Tasmania and in the particular context of a debate about an incident at the original landing site of Risdon Cove in 1803. As part of a Writer's Festival, the man was asked to participate in a panel discussion organised around the theme of the 'telling of histories'. Joining him on the panel were two of the key protagonists in the recent heated national debate about Australia's Aboriginal history, and in the audience were members of each sector of the Aboriginal population, amongst a largely non-Aboriginal audience. The panellist himself was from the DD-B community, though with a long history of activism and acceptance in the TAC, in part on the basis of his activism. In the audience was a member of the political elite from the Bass Strait Islander community, a Grass Roots man,³⁵ the leading Lia Pootah spokesperson, a young academic from the DD-B community and a young man of unknown community

³⁴ The dominant interpretation, argued by Lyndall Ryan (1996) and Henry Reynolds (1981) for example, is that a great many Aborigines were killed in the colonial period. The dominant history has been that a massacre of Aborigines occurred at Risdon Cove. Keith Windschuttle (2002) disputed this and challenged their scholarship. This incident is recounted from fieldnotes (11/09/03); for more on the background to the situation, see Moore 2004.

³⁵ The people who call themselves 'grass roots' Aborigines (for example, AA3) are a purist splinter group of the core community. They resist the authority or the TAC and engagement in the political relationship with the state, do not identify as Palawa but as 'moonbird people' (AA3, statement in radio interview, 10/9/02), regard the use of *palawa kani* as disrespectful to the Ancestors, and seek cultural authenticity by proximity to the past. They refused to accept most who wished to vote in the ATSIC election.

affiliation. In the rest of the packed venue were writers, social justice activists, academics and students.

The panellist set the scene by thanking the original owners of the land using some *palawa kani* words that signified a continuity with pre-colonial Aboriginality and that he could expect would establish his Aboriginal *bona fides* with the progressive audience and his expertise as an analyst of Aboriginal history. Since it identified him with the Palawa³⁶ and his long-time activism, he could expect it to simultaneously invoke the loyalty of the representative of his other audience, the core community, *and* establish his superiority to the Lia Pootah, who were not accepted as Palawa. His introduction thus included himself and excluded others.

Over the course of the debate and subsequent discussion, he secured his relationship with his Aboriginal audience by stating that ‘This is our history, not yours’ and that ‘our demand for justice will continue for as long as injustice continues’. Those statements, using key terms of the discourse, established his attachment, loyalty, victim subject position and rightness of cause, suiting both his main Aboriginal and progressive audiences. He ‘inoculated’ (Barthes 2000: 150-51) his position with the former by admitting to the slight handicap of not being an Islander and saying that he did not claim to speak for the entire Community. That Aboriginal culture, history and self made it safe to present a more refined, moderate and contradictory self and thus secure his relationship with the progressive audience.

Accordingly, he integrated within his performance a less essentialist notion of Aboriginality which suited the progressive audience, without alienating his Aboriginal audience. He said that there are many Aboriginalities, and that ‘we are all different’. Though indicating that ‘we’ (connoting Tasmanian Aborigines to progressives but the core *plus* to other Aborigines) call the Risdon Cove incident a massacre, he, as an academic and a rational man, had recognised the debate about the incident and changed his own account of it to refer simply to the deaths of

³⁶ The name Palawa was adopted by an Aboriginal community meeting in 1994 as ‘our word for “Tassie blackfella”’. Since it was found to be from a south-east language, other words from the north-east with the same meaning, ‘pakana’ or ‘puggana’, are also used. In effect, the name represents the core *plus* and excludes Aborigines who are not recognised by this core group (see *pakana news* 52, 8/2002).

many families. This gently qualified his activist line, giving him the appearance of reasonability, as did his allusion to some internal tension over the issue.

In this performance he intentionally (see Bakhtin 1981: 75-8, 359) stratified languages and meanings, subtly orchestrating the inferences that the various audiences simultaneously made and stitching together a believable, coherent simulation self superimposed over the contrary self-positioning that was involved in its construction. He avoided clumsy essentialist claims and exclusive positions, played with the 'obscuring mist' of multiple meanings (Bakhtin 1981: 276) and glossed dissonances like that between his implicit claim ('we', 'our') to represent the Aboriginal community and his rhetorical claim to not do so, doing so with such skill that the performance of the unitary Aborigine appeared natural. The simulation singular culture and unitary self was then, a hybrid construction (Bakhtin 1981: 302) which his own multi-voicedness and real-life hybridity made possible. He could only simulate the past and the appropriately passionate Aboriginal victim of injustice by virtue of being modern, educated and fully agentic.

Even his skills were though, not sufficient to satisfy the Grass Roots man, who shattered the spell by bursting out, 'Shame job, shame; white man up there pretending to be an Aborigine', and telling him that he had no right to speak for Aborigines. Ultimately, this performer of the masquerade, like the government employee, was unmasked by its demands, and the collapse of normative tact spelt the end of the session.

The burden of Aboriginality

The Aboriginal masquerade, a project of mimicry³⁷ undertaken in response to the hegemonic progressive policy and Aboriginal politics, and thought by many (within the terms of that hegemon) to resolve the unhomeliness produced by colonisation and improve self-esteem, instead realises a simulation Aboriginality and exaggerates its lopsided prevalence over the persisting lived realities of

³⁷ Homi Bhabha (1994: 85-92) has argued that mimicry is a powerful form of resistance to colonial domination, but in the case of Aboriginal Tasmanians, as the mimicry assumes a reality for the performers, and as the evidence of the distance between the performed and the everyday reality becomes obvious to outside observers, the power of the mimicry wanes and becomes itself counter-productively real.

cultural intersection and subjective complexity. In the process, the masquerade makes Aboriginality a debilitating burden. Every act of masquerade further concretises the simulation culture and self and inflates the extent and difficulties of difference from other Australians, even as it proves individuals' capabilities of negotiating that difference. Every act turns those capabilities to the production of difference and subalternity and sacrifices the capabilities to negotiate difference productively, making the demotic negotiation of difference more problematic than it need be.

The masquerade imposes its burden in three main ways. Firstly, the finished, flawless, hyperreal Aboriginality it seeks to realise is forever out of reach and liable to betrayal by each actor's imperfect lived reality, and thereby imposes a sapping demand for identity work, even for the most skilled. Secondly, each individual's Aboriginality becomes deficient by comparison and the masquerade a source of psychic tension. Finally, it relies on the performance of an impotently resistant victim Aborigine, every enactment of which entrenches individuals more deeply in subalternity. Ultimately, the masquerade requires the surrender (by those who believe it as reality) or partial compromise (by those who use it as a means of maintaining their errant real-world multiplicity) of their extant capabilities to negotiate the cultural intersection and subjective multiplicity that constitute their everyday lives.

Sapping demand for identity work

The performed Aboriginal culture and subject offers a superabundance of tailored signs of Aboriginality—speech acts, costumes, ceremonies, behaviours, knowledges and practices—that appear to be the mythic Aboriginality, but is a simulation (Baudrillard 1983, 1990, 1998) object 'that offer[s] an abundance of signs that [it is] real, but in fact ... [is] not' (Ritzer 1998: 12). It mimics the supposed original and creates a new reality. Peoples' social relations are not located only or even primarily within the Aboriginal population, ceremonies are not embedded in material production, *palawa kani* is not a means of daily communication and ceremonial gatherings simulate an imagined original but in fact new cultural function. In its self-consciousness, it is a hyperreal (Eco 1986), more Aboriginal, Aboriginality than the original. As articulated in the preceding

chapter, the past is an arcadia and its people heroised, the culture singular and unambiguously distinguishable from others, and the subject entire unto itself—whole, finished, a cultural cipher thoroughly identified with the collective and unchanged by the passage of time:

... he is a fully finished and completed being ... hopelessly ready-made; he is all there, from beginning to end he coincides with himself, he is absolutely equal to himself. He is, furthermore, completely externalised. There is not the slightest gap between his authentic essence and its external manifestation. All his potential, all his possibilities are realised utterly in his external social position, in the whole of his fate and even in his external appearance, outside of this predetermined fate and predetermined position there is nothing. He has already become everything that he could become, and he could become only that which he has already become. He is entirely externalised: ... everything in him is exposed and loudly expressed: his internal world and all his external characteristics, his appearance and his actions all lie on a single plane (Bakhtin 1981: 34).

Masquerade cannot possibly realise this Aboriginality. The hyperreal self never suffers the conflict of intersecting roles and has none of the inconclusiveness, self-contradiction or inadequacy to situations of real people. Thus, though the performer cannot possibly succeed in realising the hyperreal and is infinitely liable to discreditation, he/she must forever perform and forever obfuscate. Some lapses in delivery and character and some imperfect obfuscation inevitably permit glimpses of unauthorised cultural affiliations and selves, and those realities intrude, despite all best efforts: one derides another's claim to Aboriginality,³⁸ one is not permitted to renounce his previously accepted Aboriginality despite proof of his Scottish heritage,³⁹ another is accepted as Aboriginal while his full sibling is rejected,⁴⁰ a claim to local knowledge by one

³⁸ In the writer's festival above.

³⁹ See *The Advocate* 23/3/2006: 1. There remained some doubt and the man concerned said that he wanted the matter cleared up so that he could 'embrace my culture—whichever one it is' (*The Advocate* 31/5/06: 11).

⁴⁰ See *The Mercury* 13/7/2002: 1-2.

group is denied by another⁴¹ and the claimed respect for Elders and obligations to kin is contradicted by the reality of elderly people dying alone and unfound for weeks.⁴²

Where such discrepant realities intrude they dialogise the performance, exposing it to comparison, puncturing the neo-reality and leaving the simulation Aboriginality a parodic version of Aboriginality, not the original referent at all (see Bakhtin 1981: 59). These dialogising intrusions make claims to be able to smell snakes in the bush and to have secret-sacred knowledge and a primary orality travesties of Aboriginality. For these reasons, the performance is a difficult and demanding task that demands constant social interactional work. It means that Aboriginal selfhood cannot be done routinely, but is interminably and inordinately consuming.

Subjective angst

To the extent that the masquerade constructs a hyperreal neo-reality, it builds a deal of subjective angst for those invested in it. Individuals can come to believe fully in the simulation, which serves to heighten their sense of injustice and frustration at the failure of the world to recognise them as such and to ‘right the wrongs’. It can also constitute a threat to their integrity of self, leading them to feel that they can never measure up, that their actual departure from the archetype makes them less Aboriginal. Though the loss of culture and self is in the dominant discourse often proclaimed as a profound challenge to Aboriginal self-esteem, this suggests that the masquerade itself is part of that challenge.

Other than those who grow up immersed in the political discourse of the core community, many students are at ease with their social, cultural and subjective mixedness, and comfortable with their simultaneous Aboriginal and other subjectivities. Many adults (for instance AA2, AA7, AA9) are similarly at ease with their plurality and departure from the mythic. Both groups may see

⁴¹ Representatives of the TAC have claimed that Cape Barren Island was known as ‘Truwanna’, but one man who was born and lived there announced that he never heard it referred to by that name; see *The Sunday Tasmanian* 22/1/2006: 20.

⁴² While working for the OAA in 1996-97, I was told of this happening in Tasmania and being a source of great embarrassment to many. Genat (2006: 60-72) provides an account of the abuse of elderly Aborigines by their children in mainland Australia that corroborates the possibility and the dynamics producing it.

themselves as simply students, mothers (AA8) or teachers (AA7) rather than *Aboriginal* students, mothers and teachers. Other students (AS19, AS20) and adults (AA1, AA3, AA4, AA6) are dominated by the discourse, adopt the performance and become, at the abstracted level of the discourse and the imaginary, essentialist, unitary and oppositional.⁴³

Individuals from both groups are immersed in the hegemonic discourse and over time, socialised and instructed in Aboriginality (through Aboriginal Studies courses for example), normalised by identity politics and social pressure, granted authority by government agencies as experts on Aboriginal affairs, given succour by those who tell them that they are reconnecting with their real selves,⁴⁴ and otherwise widely affirmed,⁴⁵ many become increasingly confident in the postured Aboriginality and imagine themselves to have the knowledges, capacities, proclivities, emotions and even histories that they are told are innate as a result of being Aboriginal. Kaye McPherson for example, thinks that many friendships are formed on the basis of an innate even if as yet unknown shared Aboriginality.⁴⁶ Forgetting that it was learned, and forgetting its sources in anthropology, they believe that their knowledge of all things Aboriginal is superior, as natives, to that of others. Gary (AA1) believes that he has an innate spirituality and belongingness with the land even if others have not come to realise it. He and others can become passionate advocates and defenders of the Aboriginal narrative and associated rights.⁴⁷

Every act within the masquerade that ‘works’ by being accepted, adds to and strengthens the illusionary reality. The envioning discourse of their superior

⁴³ They may for instance, as Jay McDonald appears to do, believe that we, the Aboriginal Tasmanians are ‘a distinct people’ (letter to the editor, *The Mercury*, 27/9/2002: 20).

⁴⁴ The grandmother of one student (pers. comm., 8/11/01) told me that her granddaughter was concentrating on healing, and indicated that a snake she had drawn was evidence. This notion of healing is strong in psychological approaches to Aboriginal issues; see for example, ‘The Healing Circle’ led by Judy Atkinson and Tjanara Goreng Goreng at the ‘Psychology and Indigenous Australians: Teaching, Practice and Theory’ Conference, University of South Australia 14th-15th July, 2008; also see Moore 2008: 659-60.

⁴⁵ The mythic Aboriginality is constantly affirmed in the local and national media. For example, the Aboriginal child star of the film ‘Australia’, Brandon Walters is reported to have an ‘innate understanding of the bush’ (*The Weekend Australian Magazine*, 24-25/01/09: 10, 13).

⁴⁶ *Four Corners*, ABC TV, 26/8/2002.

⁴⁷ This passion is evident in the photographs (*The Saturday Mercury* 19/10/2002: 7) of Aboriginal tears and anger after the Administrative Appeals Tribunal overturned the rejection of 130 peoples’ Aboriginality. Also see *Four Corners* ‘Blackfella, Whitefella’, ABC TV, 26/8/2002, and the letters pages of *The Mercury* 21/9/2002: 24 and 31/10/2002: 20.

Aboriginal credibility empowered students from the core community to dominate the alternative education unit, monopolise the teacher's time when they wished, and peremptorily send off those from peripheral communities to get chips for morning tea (fieldnotes, 6/5/2002). It led adults on Flinders Island, as reported by the teacher who accompanied them, to ostracise a visiting group of FC-S Aboriginal students from Hobart who were on the island as part of an ASSPA trip to learn about their Aboriginality (pers. comm., 2/8/2001). Every such act, if not confounded, reinforces that capacity and discursive reality.

Thus built, the mythic Aboriginal persona can 'congeal over time to create an illusion of [that Aboriginal] self on the inside' (Elliott 2001: 117), so that some know it not as myth or social construct but as nature.⁴⁸ It remains however, a strange selfhood, like that of the anthropologist Malinowski, whose character was forged in professional artifice and became 'staged but also truthful, a pose but nonetheless authentic' (Clifford 1986: 151). Adding to the peculiarity of the artifice bleeding into the lived and felt, the objective discrepancies between the ideal and the real continue to produce popular scepticism. Individual members of wider audiences may allow themselves to be convinced in single instances, as Shakespeare (2004: 139) did when he witnessed the situation in the Writers Festival and only wondered, 'What *was* going on?'. Over time though, repetition raises insistent questions and observers begin to see the implausibility of, and become cynical about, the Aboriginality they see. Teachers for instance, work in recommended culturally appropriate ways even as they pass *sotto voce* comments that 'they're not really Aborigines' (fieldnotes, 23/8/2001). There is a widespread undercurrent of cynicism about Aboriginal motives and resentment towards programs which give special consideration on what some see as flimsy bases. Aboriginal Tasmanians can as a result come to feel the simulation Aboriginal self urgently, and know that it is explicitly accepted and yet deeply, informally and powerfully resisted.

These circumstances crowd in, producing unsettling ontological and emotional turmoil. Some Aborigines in effect become the simulation, and can come to believe that they are, in fact, torn between two worlds and inadequate to either, as

⁴⁸ This describes the 'grass roots' people (including AA3). They are convinced of the naturalness of their 'true' Aboriginality; see for example, *The Mercury* 6/7/1999: 5; *The Saturday Mercury* 14/7/2002: 1, 5.

the discourse says of them.⁴⁹ Others identify with, and think that they *are* that type, but are painfully aware that their lived Aboriginality differs from, and is considered by many inadequate to it. They are ambiguously inadequate to the epic, the mythic, the hyperreal, their Aboriginality somehow deficient, and they under siege. These circumstances can lead them to hold their Aboriginality as a determined or “deliberate belief” (see Clifford 1986: 142), held as against the rest of the (settler-Australian and sometimes Aboriginal) world, and accompanied by angry resentment and frustration, fragile assertion and aggressive rejection of anything other than confirmation of their self-image.

To some, the culture and subject become self-evident, and they feel the gap between the imagined and their own Aboriginality agonisingly. The logic of dichotomy and oppression becomes similarly self-evident, and so it is commonsensical to ask, as a representative of the TAC did,⁵⁰ ‘How can the government pour millions of dollars into white education and infrastructure but can’t assist black children?’ These Aboriginal Tasmanians are angered by the doubt about their Aboriginality and frustrated by the failure of governments to address the rightness of their cause, and the mix of emotions can dominate their lives. Gary (AA1) imagines himself as the mythic Aborigine but struggles to gain acceptance by anyone other than well-meaning progressives who *want* him to be an Aborigine, know the Dreaming and tell them of it. In fact, it is they and the progressive imagination that have made him an Aborigine. He spent many years of his adult life searching in vain to be recognised as an Aborigine by people in northern Australia, and is nearly overwhelmed by his failure to be recognised and his discovery that his Aboriginality does not shine out of him as imagined. Though for the most part a problem for the less socially skilled, these emotions can affect the political elite, and the problem manifests for them in the constant

⁴⁹ This is repeatedly reported in the media. Though Walters (note 45 above) lives in the township of Broome, he is reported to have a slightly tenuous ‘foothold in two worlds’ (*The Weekend Australian Magazine*, 24-25/1/09: 10); another famous Aboriginal actor David Gulpilil (see *The Weekend Australian Magazine* 5-6/5/2007; *The Saturday Mercury* 20/4/2002: 40 and 30/12/2006: 42-43) is similarly torn and his personal troubles (as reported in *The Mercury* 31/3/07: 12) are explained as a consequence of his ‘painful [cultural] divide’ (*The Australian* 4/7/2007: 6). Even successful middle-class Aboriginal Australians are described (*The Weekend Australian* 6-7/3/2004: 30) as ‘caught in the cultural divide’.

⁵⁰ Letter to the editor, *The Mercury* 19/6/2008: 31.

lookout for transgression and threat, and the need to 'know you've got the ones you want on the inside and the others ... locked out'.⁵¹

Self-perpetuating subalternity

Alongside the hyperreal exotic other, the masquerade is a performance of the innocent black victim (see Hall 1988: 28), an Aboriginal subject that is, as a consequence of colonial dispossession and on-going discrimination, comprehensively disempowered, marginalised and alienated from the wider society. As above, it is also a performance of the self of the epic past, which demands that the contemporary Aborigine must endure and remain the same through the trials and tribulations of the present. As Keffe (1988) has argued elsewhere, cultural constancy affirms their Aboriginality, and practices such as the sharing of abalone with kin become critical signifiers.⁵² These dimensions of the simulation Aborigine combine to have the masquerade become one of constant 'not fitting', 'being the other', victimhood and resistance, with little apparent ability to resist or take positive action other than through long-suffering attempts to preserve and recover the culture and self-integrity of the past. In accord with the zero-sum logic of the discourse and compounded by the totalising epic character, they cannot appear to be socially included or successful, or fully engaged, agentic modern citizens. Even their resistance, which must be that of the hapless survivor in need of support and protection, must be evidence of their limited capacity to engage, participate and be equal. This explains Mansell's statement that 'we are at a loss what to do' in regard to the improvement of educational outcomes.⁵³

Insofar as Aboriginal Tasmanians successfully enact this culture-bound victim, they secure a perversely proud subalternity that, 'once set in motion, ... [keeps] ticking on like a *perpetuum mobile*' (Baumann 1996: 27). Imagined, performed, genuinely felt as it congeals, and protected against ambivalence by deliberate belief, the simulation victimhood has real consequences. It has some people limit the capacities they otherwise employ to negotiate the small differences between

⁵¹ Jim Everett, in response to questions at the 2003 NAIDOC Week gathering at Riawunna, 10th July 2003.

⁵² One Tasmanian is known for his long and public campaign for his cultural right to take mutton birds, swan eggs and abalone; see *The Mercury* 26/1/2000: 3; 6/8/2003: 5; ATSIC Media Release 13/1/2004.

⁵³ *The Mercury* 25/10/2004: 15.

themselves and settler-Australians and to establish relationships of trust with them. Some restrict their interactions with settler-Australians to very few trusted relationships, take a guarded approach to other relationships and restrict the depth of even intimate relationships.⁵⁴ Though they may be aware at one level of the need for much more beyond Aboriginality to teach Aboriginal Studies (the skills of analysing comparative empirical data, theoretical sophistication and pedagogical expertise being examples), some still support policies of staff Aboriginalisation.

The masquerade complicates Aborigines' social participation. Though most are, or have the potential to be, socially adept in interacting with non-Aborigines it has them apparently not able to do so, other than on sufferance, even as they seek to maintain their social situation. Though they are in fact politically adept, they cannot apparently be so other than from a position of disempowered moral rightness. This is so even as they must continue to be invisibly adept. And though they are socially adept, they may limit the contexts in which they engage with others and restrict the range of people with whom they engage, and the extent of their engagement with them.

All of this performance can sour otherwise healthy relationships, and have settler-Australian partners, employers, colleagues, teachers and landlords apprehend and respond to the interactional difficulties that result as if they were a natural part of Aboriginality.⁵⁵ According to the success of this aspect of the masquerade, as the interactional process continues, some Aboriginal Tasmanians begin to think of settler-Australians as outsiders who cannot understand them or racists who refuse to house and employ them, find communication with them difficult, begin to feel alienated from them, and find the need to negotiate with them (on matters such as the return of human remains for instance) an affront to them as the original people. They may to a greater or lesser extent, or at one level of consciousness, disengage from (even as they identify with) the wider society

⁵⁴ An Aboriginal man confided (pers. comm., 1997) to me that he could never trust a white person completely, though for at least the past twelve or thirteen years he has lived in intimate relationships with white women.

⁵⁵ This is not to suggest that these consequences are either solely initiated by, or the sole responsibility of, Aborigines. They are produced in the relationship between Aborigines and settler-Australian people and institutions, and specifically the progressive public policy that grounds that relationship. This logic is developed in the concluding chapter.

and its goals, values and dreams, manifesting in the gradual disengagement from education that is a feature of Aboriginal education nationally⁵⁶ and contributing to the lack 'of a strong ... intellectual group' (Muecke 1992: 40), a lack of care for health because it is a bourgeois concern (see Gibson and Pearson 1987; Mowbray and Senior 2006: 223), and compromised participation as citizens.

Ultimately, this compromise of relationships and participation can produce real marginalisation which is commonsensically perceived, by Aborigines and progressives alike, as evidence of discrimination, denied self-determination and the legacy of colonial dispossession. It is commonsensically evident that service delivery fails to cater to the needs of Aborigines. This commonsense is consonant with the dominant discourse, and can too easily explain away Aborigines' loss of work, lack of educational success, poor health, trouble with housing authorities or other hallmarks of Aboriginal 'victimhood' (when each may also be explicable as the reality effects of the story of Aboriginality in the politics and the masquerade). That is, as innocent victims of external social forces simply trying to live their culture, they can feel unable to influence and not responsible for their situation, leading them, as Pearson (2007a) among others has argued, to refuse personal responsibility for their circumstances.⁵⁷

Some Aborigines wear their marginalisation proudly, as proof of their resistance to assimilation (see Keffe 1988), and come to depend on the symbolic support it delivers, since it confirms the national acceptance of responsibility for their condition, their rights and entitlements 'as a distinct people' and their Aboriginality. As many others around Australia, the University of Tasmania's Aboriginal centre provides, along with a major in Aboriginal Studies, a foundation studies program to facilitate the entry of Aborigines into undergraduate study and support for Aboriginal students already undertaking study. Some of the support consists of access to free telephone, computer and kitchen facilities, morning and afternoon tea supplies, a comfortable communal space and individual tutoring.

⁵⁶ Nationally, and in Tasmania to a slightly less marked extent, the overall pattern is of poorer indigenous rates of attendance and retention (from Years 7/8-10, 7/8-11, 7/8-12 and 10-12), declining outcomes in literacy and numeracy over the years of schooling and earlier departure from school. See Commonwealth of Australia 2007: xxii-xxiii, xxviii, 20,43-53, 189-96; Northern Territory Department of Education 1999: 31-39.

⁵⁷ This point is developed further in the concluding chapter.

During 2004, the office administrator, also an active member of the core community, became aware that non-Aboriginal students were regularly using the kitchen facilities and computers. At the same time a casual member of academic staff conducted tutorials in the comfortable lounge chairs in the large foyer. Some unnamed Aboriginal students allegedly complained to the office administrator that they were not able to use the lounge chairs or access the telephone in the foyer at those times and that non-indigenous students were using the computers and kitchen. The following note (26/10/2004), reproduced unedited, was left in the suggestion box:

Students of Murina and Uni Tasmania. 'Indigenous' students at that. Did you know that is why the Riawunna Center is here! It's for *us indigenous* people. We don't want the non-indigenous students using our computers or facilities. Please tell them to campaign to John Howard if they think it's unfair in Anyway. See what happens when they get no reply from Him. If no one takes action we will start a partition to keep them away. They want to take what little we have. Murina Students.

The centre itself, and particularly the kitchen (as was argued in a School of Sociology and Social Work research seminar, 7/5/2004) had been regarded by Aboriginal staff and students as 'cultural space', and this perception surfaced in those complaints and the office administrator's interpretation. She placed prominent signs on every computer to the effect that they were for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students only and told non-Aboriginal students not to use the room. She locked the kitchen door and opened it to Aboriginal students on request.

In this situation, the issue for the students and member of staff was not the access to support, as very few had to wait to use the foyer or phone, the computer room is very rarely in heavy demand and the kitchen caters comfortably. The issue was more the affront to an Aboriginal sense of specialness and the need to protect it. For them the notion of being owed support has come to have undue importance, since it is owed on the basis of historical injustice and continuing discrimination, and it proves their Aboriginality. They feel aggrieved if that support is not explicitly available, exclusive and institutionally policed. The fact that the support

structures and exclusive access were less than sacrosanct was an affront to their Aboriginality.

The collective and individual investment in this disempowered subject position means that individuals become the innocent victim of circumstances beyond them, and in need of protection and support rather than the competent agentic subjects that they mostly otherwise are. It also means that the political aim of liberation can never be brought to a conclusion. Because in the main it consists of the production of signs of equivalence to an imagined reality, there is little to substantiate the signified Aboriginality other than 'The Struggle'. It is a series of interrelated chimeras: there is little culture, social structure, communal coherence or integrity of self to be recovered (since in the mystical form they never were), no homeland to which they might return or oppression from which to gain release. The emancipation on which the political movement is premised cannot happen, since it would spell the end of the production of signs of Aboriginality, and in their absence the simulated Aboriginality may evaporate. The simulation struggle for liberation against the simulation oppressive white other, and thus the flag-burning protest against Australia Day,⁵⁸ is what matters since it is productive of signs, not the achievement of the notional end.

Thus the continuous production in the masquerade of signs of equivalence to oppression, marginalisation and struggle is paramount. The masquerade must continue, even as historical injustice and its continuing effects is recognised, institutional discrimination overturned and (though imperfectly) service delivery becomes more sensitive to difference. The politics must perpetuate the dominant discourse. This focus explains the issues facing Aboriginal Tasmanians as causally connected to colonisation and discrimination, demanding solution from outside the community. However, those issues are not soluble by external action alone, and individuals' performance of the masquerade cedes their agency to the dominant discourse and thus their opportunity to transcend it.

Conclusion

Success in the masquerade makes the discourse and simulation socially real and counter-productively binds Aborigines in the network of power relations that

⁵⁸ See *The Mercury* over the period 26th January to 1st February 2008.

encloses the Aboriginal subject and leaves individuals with little room to make ‘autonomous’ decisions. The story of one mature age female Aboriginal student illustrates this entrapment and the limitations on agency that attend the masquerade.⁵⁹ She had moved to Tasmania from the mainland and enrolled in an Aboriginal Studies unit which analysed contemporary Tasmanian identity politics. She was finding that the critique accurately portrayed and explained her own experience of Aboriginal Tasmania and was contributing well in tutorial discussions, often with real-life experiences that paralleled and filled in more detail than provided in the course. She had passed in an unexpectedly disappointing first assignment, which though reasonably well-written, had taken a line that was in accord with the dominant discourse and without any of the critical analysis which had been present in lectures and reading materials, and in her contributions to tutorials. Her own critical voice was absent.

She explained that her writing skills were not good, and so she had asked for some additional tutoring. She had tried in the first draft to take a critical approach to the question but the tutor had strongly advised her to take the orthodox political line. Since she relied on the tutor for assistance she had felt some pressure to abandon what might have been her own approach in favour of that line. At the same time, she was developing a cultural museum which would house some newly-found artefacts from the local area in which she now lived. At the time of the essay, she had gained the permission of the local Aboriginal people to go ahead, but state heritage legislation required that she gain the permission of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council (now the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, TALSC). As that body is aligned with the politically dominant TAC, it was imperative that she cultivate support with that organisation and the core community, and since the tutor was very involved in the politics of that community, she had felt that it was in her interests to agree with her tutor’s advice.

Her capacity for agency in these circumstances was constrained and she took what she thought was the best course available, to opt out of the networks by writing her second essay without her tutor’s help. She also sought expert advice about how she might subtly negotiate to have the TAC not take a doctrinaire

⁵⁹ This student told her story (29/92004) to me and with her permission it was discussed in class in the course of a unit on the dynamics of identity in contemporary Tasmania.

response to her project. She was released from some of the constraint only by accepting the potential costs of those decisions, which were in turn, exclusion by the gatekeeping community, poorer marks and refusal of permission to go ahead with the museum.

The burden borne by this woman is a metaphor for that borne by others, whether they specifically adopt the masquerade as a way of negotiating the identity conundrum or not, because it is institutionalised and difficult to transcend. Many Aboriginal public servants may wish to provide service to Aborigines regardless of their Aboriginal status, or teach a critical Aboriginal Studies or enjoy full and easy relationships as participatory citizens, but feel unable to do so. Caught in the trap, the product of a complex intertwining of progressive and Aboriginal discourse that resists the death of the 'essential black subject', they try to negotiate their social life by ceding some of their decision-making capacity to the hegemonic discourse. This is to be trapped by the story of Aboriginality or to allow culture to become their 'prison' (see Muecke 1992: 40). The following chapter considers a minority of Aboriginal Tasmanians who are able to exercise a greater measure of agency, to surrender less of their capabilities to the institutions that constrain them, and to transcend the trap, though at some cost to themselves.

Chapter 7 Old Aboriginality, New Aboriginalities

Introduction

Preceding chapters have established the means by which the liberal state and Aboriginal political elites together constitute a 'structured dilemma' (Hollinger 1992: 80) as a product of the urge to social control. The dilemma takes the form of a conditional choice between *either* authentic Aboriginality and concomitant social marginalisation, *or* full social inclusion on the basis of a compromised hybrid Aboriginality. It is structured by the normalising practices of the liberal state and of Aboriginal politics, which combine to seduce many Aborigines into desiring the hegemonic model of Aboriginality, coerce them into abiding by the terms and conditions of the proposed choice, and govern their performance of themselves as Aborigines. Those chapters have also outlined the extent of Aboriginal integration in the wider society and culture and their subjective complexity, and revealed the masquerade of unitary Blackness which they enact in order to negotiate their actual deviation from the authorised Aborigine. Those chapters have also demonstrated the subjective and material counter-productivity associated with the attempt.

Those who accede to those social forces, including the political elite, are comprehensively governed. This chapter focuses on a small number of Aboriginal Tasmanians who are immersed in the same social, cultural and political milieu but respond in a different, innovative and nuanced way. These are 'nonconformist' Aborigines, and it is the goal of the chapter to establish that in their response they are of fundamental significance to an understanding of Tasmanian Aboriginality, its circumstance and future. The chapter argues that the nonconformists share a lived reality with the governed: the colonial history and personal memory, lived heteroglossia, hegemonic Aboriginality, hybrid 'performed cluster/tension of positionalities' (Clifford 1997: 272), and manifold social and political pressures of the structured dilemma. However, they diverge from the governed in a profound way.

They are not convinced by the twin governmentalities and realise that the dichotomies are false, the paradox confected and the choice chimerical, and that it is perfectly possible to be Aboriginal and a participatory citizen. They do not

conform to the governing expectations but embrace the heteroglossia, reach across the two supposedly opposed cultures, and announce a range of subject positions which includes, goes beyond and modifies the hegemonic Aboriginal self. The nonconformists admit those selves that the hegemon constitutes as 'excessive' and antagonistic, allowing them to interact and interanimate, and so they enunciate more complex and whole selves. In doing so, they resolve the dilemma, the negative consequences of the masquerade and, since the complex selves they enunciate are those the governed hide, also highlight the extent to which the governed auto-regulate. They act as 'organic hybrids' (Bakhtin 1981: 360), offering alternative ways of being Aboriginal and a post-essentialist Aboriginal politics. In essence, the argument is that the governed and the nonconformists constitute two sides of the same coin, with the former currently ascendant but anachronistic and counter-productive, and the latter subordinated but with the potential to inform a wider reconciliation of some of the pressing problems produced by the old politics.

After an introductory section illustrating the distinctiveness of the nonconformists' Aboriginal lives, the argument develops through three stages. The first stage understands their stance as being to 'live with and through [the] difference' (Hall 1990: 235) that is the condition of their existence. They engage fully with the several cultural 'presences' that dominate their lives and follow the hybridising subjective development that accompanies it, developing complex dialogised, "changing" same' (Gilroy 1991, 1993a) Aboriginal identifications that are ambivalently the same as and different from the hegemonic Aboriginal self.

The second stage of the argument revisits the stance taken by the governed in their response to the circumstances, which is to live with and across difference but also imaginatively and performatively live *despite* it, in Hall's (1990: 225-37) terms. That is, the political elite uses its dialogised understandings of culture, identity and difference to constitute a culture and self that denies other, 'excessive' and supposedly less Aboriginal selves. The point of this comparison is to enhance the conception of nonconformity, specifically the ways in which they negotiate their refusal of the hegemonic self, their reconciliation of the notional split between that self and their own lived excessive selves, and their enunciation of new and integrated Aboriginalities.

The third stage of the argument draws on Alberto Moreiras's (2001) work to extend the analysis of the nonconformists' engagement with difference, negotiation of double consciousness and enunciation of ambivalent belongingnesses. It educes the radicalism and political potential of their hybridity, which rest in their capacity to articulate simultaneously with hegemony and subalternity, to be at once of the 'centre' and of the 'margin', to be 'rooted' in the particular and able to 'shift' (Yuval-Davis 1997b) beyond it. This difficult positioning enables them to work within and simultaneously unwork the hegemony of the liberal state and Aboriginal resistance.

The nonconformist Aborigines

At her large public funeral in 2003, the late Ida West was lauded by the political leaders of state and Aboriginal community. She was a prominent Tasmanian and Aboriginal Tasmanian, and the local newspaper talked of her as an 'elder stateswoman', a 'voice of reason and ... reconciliation [and] ... a fearless defender of her people'.¹ A member of the core Aboriginal community said that she had the 'special gift of being able to show pride in Aboriginality at the same time as being able to understand other people. She could impress with her determination yet listen to what other people had to say'.² It was her capacity to do both—to proudly assert particularity and at the same time transcend unitariness, separateness and division—that lent her and other nonconformists like her their special quality, and as if to corroborate that, one senior figure in the Aboriginal political elite remembered Auntie Ida as having said that, 'We want the same thing, you and I, just we've got different ways of going about it' (fieldnotes, 11/9/03).

The title of her autobiography, *Pride Against Prejudice: Reminiscences of a Tasmanian Aborigine* (West 1987), bespeaks her balance: pride in her Aboriginality despite the prejudice of others, her capacity to feel pride without prejudice against those others, and her desire to transcend prejudice. In it she recalled her personal experience of Bass Strait Islander communal life in the early twentieth century and her Aboriginality based in that experience. She told a story very similar to that told by Molly Mallett, another recently deceased member of

¹ *The Mercury* 12/9/03: 1.

² *The Mercury* 12/9/03: 9.

the cultural elite of the core community, of lesser renown but similar approach, in her autobiography, *My Past – Their Future: Stories from Cape Barren Island* (Mallett 2001). The emphasis in both was on nostalgic memory of early family and communal lives with some memory of political battles. Mallett (2001: 18) for example, wrote of communal sharing, familiarity with the bush and bush tucker (pp. 16, 19), of Sunday as a day of rest (p. 13), waltzing (p. 14), and remote medicine (p. 23), parenting styles and respect for others' property (p. 8).

This home culture, mostly shaped by remoteness, socio-economic hardship and battling to make a living from agriculture and fishing, is represented as 'our way of life', a fusion which in the main neither woman disaggregates. While they do not explicitly refer to that way of life, habits or attitudes as Aboriginal, both were aware of being different, known as half-castes and suffering discrimination at the hands of the Europeans on the islands. They did identify with the generic and imagined Australian Aboriginality, West (1987: 30) assuming vestigial elements of old Aboriginality in her daughter and feeling a shared cultural affiliation with 'all my people from other states' (p. 31). She also recognised some aspects of her life, such as hard work or strict discipline, as 'the white man's way' and 'no disgrace to us' (1987: 45-6).

Unlike the enrolment of them to political purpose, neither woman claimed any of their experience, behaviour or perception as evidence of Aboriginal authenticity. Neither interpreted bush food, routine sharing or bush medicine as evidence of Aboriginality, yet in reportage following West's funeral, Michael Mansell³ described her early life as 'more akin to traditional Aboriginal society than Western society' and another of the political elite, Heather Sculthorpe,⁴ stressed her 'rich culture and spirituality'. West and Mallett were proud of their Aboriginality, but it was not of the same kind as that for which the political elite labour, nor was it that of previous times in Tasmania. West (1987: 45) claimed to have had merely 'little bits of culture given to us by our parents', and Mallett (2001: 46) that 'there's only shell-stringing, story-telling and mutton-birding left'. In saying that 'Aborigines used to eat sorrell ... I have some growing and I used to eat it myself', or that 'Robinson took the Aborigines', West (1987: 75, 80)

³ *The Mercury* 10/9/03: 4.

⁴ *The Mercury* 10/9/03: 9.

acknowledged her distance from pre-colonial Aborigines. And both women used the English words of their own experience, such as ‘pigface’,⁵ in preference to the *palawa kani* equivalents invariably used in political and commercial representation (on signage for example, at the heritage site of Preminghana on the west coast or the previously mentioned installation on Mt Wellington). Mallett (2001: 46) also mildly criticised hegemonic representations of Aboriginality in saying that ‘the other cultural things being taught are not Cape Barren Island traditions as I remember them’, and neither in life supported the separatism of the politics.

They were though, advocates for the interests of the regional lived and to a lesser extent the imagined state-wide Aboriginal community. They were activists in renouncing the connotations of hybridity, in the fight against discrimination, in gaining recognition for returned servicemen, and for the return of Wybalenna and other parcels of land to the Aboriginal community. They did this within the framework of the Reconciliation process and other efforts to make the wider public more sensitive to Aboriginal issues. West (1987: 1) consistently ‘mixed with everyone, tried to help people of all colours and races’, and sought to share her story with, and support all people, just as Mallett (2001: 63) did for homeless youth of all nationalities.

Given their ancestry and earlier ‘Islander’ communal life, this involvement never led to their Aboriginality nor loyalty to the Aboriginal community being questioned, even as they exceeded the stereotype. As a child, West had dreams beyond her small island world, of being a dancer in Sydney,⁶ and both celebrated universal human emotions and problems and embraced the desire for tolerance and peace, to get beyond division.⁷ In many ways they were similar to the former chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Lowitja O’Donohue,⁸ who works for removed Aboriginal children and refugees, acknowledges her Aboriginal and adoptive white family, recognises the importance of white Australians in Aboriginal affairs more generally and (see

⁵ This is the name for a common plant in Tasmania.

⁶ *Pakana news* 53 (2) 2003: 1.

⁷ *The Mercury* 10/9/03: 4.

⁸ *Living Black*, SBS TV, 9/1/05.

O'Donohue 2003) requests that she be considered human first and Aboriginal second.

A younger member of one of the prominent families of the core community (Gill, AA6), who has not had the lived experience on the Islands but has much the same cultural legitimacy and confidence on the basis of her family name, has an equally ambivalent relationship with the hegemonic Aboriginality and politics. She consciously identifies with her 'Aboriginal side' and not her English side, which she says is 'alien' to her. She has been an active TAC member since its inception and sometime office-holder. She believes that one's Aboriginality is born into one, though one may not know it; it is:

something you feel within, it's not you know how much representation you've had with the community; it's something from really really deep and it's something really special. It's something you have.

She believes that traces of innate Aboriginality can survive and shape one's actions without volition. Recently she found herself 'absolutely driven' to treat the remains of a deceased family member in a certain way, of which she is certain she had no prior conscious knowledge, but which she was later told was a 'very traditional thing to do'. However, she is not she says, 'one-minded' or 'narrow-visioned' about Aboriginality, and is beyond division, refusing to adopt the absolutist political stance and to make judgements about the authenticity of anyone else's Aboriginality. She believes that the categories do not fit everyone.

She can recall meeting some people with whom she went to school, who did not then, but have since identified as Aboriginal. She also recalls them teasing her about 'being a blackfella' at the time. Although a little hurt and doubtful about their reasons for now becoming Aboriginal, she refuses to judge their right to be Aboriginal, and accepts that they can now be Aborigines. She takes the same attitude in her job, which is to adjust the delivery of government services so that they are more amenable to Aborigines. She provides support to every person who identifies as Aboriginal, regardless of their 'credentials' as judged by the gatekeepers of the TAC, and even where it might compromise her acceptance within the core community.

Three others (Ella, AS2; Kim, AS7; Tara, AA10) and the members of the Lia Pootah community⁹ are Aboriginal in errant ways, in the sense that they either identify with multiple subject positions or disidentify with the totalising character of the Aboriginal subject position. The Lia Pootah publicly acknowledge their multiple ethnic—Aboriginal and Anglo/Irish—roots, and mixed class and occupational—convict, soldier and settler—heritages, which suggests that they do not regard their Aboriginal selves as unitary. The others identify as Aboriginal, but Kim also loudly celebrates a fluid multiplicity, Ella also refuses the exclusive nature of categorisation as Aboriginal and Tara also struggles to find a middle way between essentialism and anti-essentialism.

Ella is directly descended from Fanny Cochrane-Smith but disconnected from the community of her descendants. Her Aboriginality is secondary to her other identities. Her official status as an Aboriginal student has followed her from school to school but when she started senior secondary schooling she wrote and asked that they stop sending her Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness (ASSPA) mail.¹⁰ She refuses all invitations to participate in exclusively Aboriginal sports teams. A teacher with whom she had had a good relationship for almost two years had not been aware of her Aboriginality until it arose in the course of a classroom discussion. Ella was not at all concerned when someone said to her in class, ‘You’re Aboriginal’. She replied ‘Yes, but I’m not full-blood’. She is proud of her Aboriginality but as one of her several affiliations, some of which she describes as ‘Huonvillean’¹¹ and prospective journalist.

At her senior secondary school, Kim revels in her multiplicity. She mixes with the former prefects from her old selective state high school who ‘don’t smoke, don’t drink, don’t swear’, and are, she says, ‘just like the spring water chickens’. She also mixes with others who do drugs during lunch time, and the bogans¹² in

⁹ Lia Pootah are nonconformist in resisting the pressure to identify with one totalising ethnicity, but they do not sustain a nonconformist stance. In what is indicative of the political and social pressure to conform to a model of sameness/difference, they emphasise innate characteristics in order to establish the legitimacy of their claim to be Aboriginal. In some ways their strategy is similar to the nonconformists’ ambivalent multiple identifications, but the attempt to identify with the essentialist hegemonic Aboriginality neuters their attempt to challenge their exclusion on similarly essentialist grounds.

¹⁰ ASSPA sends mail to all students who are registered as Aboriginal, offering them support and inviting them to participate in the group and subsequent activities.

¹¹ Her home town is Huonville, south of Hobart.

¹² See Chapter Four, note 5.

the mall after school. She very rarely goes to ASSPA meetings and then only to meet new people or participate in a special activity which interests her. She plans to become a chef and keeps signifiers of her most important identities, including a small Aboriginal and an Australian flag, in her bedroom. She has some passionate Aboriginal family and friends, but flaunts her multiplicity and individuality in a way which denies the authoritative narrative of Aboriginality. She says that 'it's not like we're any different; we're not different from any other person. You know, we still breathe and eat and stuff like that'. In fact she refuses to be contained by any single one of her associations or by dominant images: 'I like being an individual in a whole group. Like, I just can't be the same as everyone else'.

Tara's family is of the FC-S line of descent to whom the community is reasonably important. To Tara herself though, the community is a distant imagined community only, but interaction with her extended family is important. When she was younger, she never disidentified or identified multiply, but now, as a tertiary student immersed in anti-essentialist feminist theory, she seriously questions the essentialism of the politics. She is trying to find a way to deal with the contradictions between her way of thinking about Aboriginality and the more essentialist thought of her family. She is 'trying to find a middle way between the two', but has yet to broach the issue with her family.

Andrew (AA8, 30/10/02) is nonconformist in a more refined and challenging way than most. He is a well-educated professional adult with some understanding of the normalising processes of the state, a good critical understanding of Aboriginal identity political processes, and the capacity to identify and disidentify in subtle ways, to move delicately between the several apparently impermeable categories and ideal-typical subject positions made available to him. He enunciates a highly nuanced Aboriginality. He is descended from the Dolly Dalrymple-Briggs (DD-B) family and community and has, he says, the Aboriginal pedigree of 'a racehorse', but his family moved to escape the drudgery of living on the land, and he grew up in Hobart. Like most other nonconformists, he is committed to his Aboriginality, but also identifies with several ethnicities, particularly that of his father and, mischievously, his wife, and class/occupational affiliations. Because he does have secure ancestry but 'wants it both ways', he is

subject to the overt policing and normalising pressure of the political elite and the wider Aboriginal community.

He has dedicated his career to improving the lot of Aboriginal Tasmanians and has held senior service delivery and executive positions in government agencies dedicated to Aboriginal development. Like Tara, but with a more developed understanding, he challenges the myth of Aboriginality through his own self-representation and by directly confronting his colleagues and Aboriginal peers. Against the norm in his field, and especially in the delivery, administration and management of Aboriginal policy and program, he dresses formally in shirt and tie, decorates his offices in a formal and high quality style, always avoiding the more casual, laid back style which is often adopted to suit the supposed preference of the Aboriginal clientele. On one occasion he took a party of senior officers for a familiarisation trip to Cape Barren Island and dressed according to this approach, despite his senior colleagues' more casual clothing. On arrival a community elder greeted him with the words, 'Well I'm glad you're dressed properly', which provided grounds for later discussion with his colleagues. This incident is considered in more detail below.

At the same time, as far as possible he adapts routine bureaucratic behaviour to suit the liminal circumstances of many Aboriginal employees and community members. For example, because of what he said was a general cynicism about the worth of special training for Aboriginal employees, he organises to meet them out of normal hours so that they do not have to ask for time off work. And he talks, tries to explain, argues with, people in junior and senior positions alike. Thus, he negotiates within the structures developed around the politics while also challenging them.

The nonconformist engagement with difference

These brief portraits are indicative of the stance adopted by some Aboriginal Tasmanians.¹³ Their responses conform to the second of Stuart Hall's (1990) two

¹³ The number demonstrably identifying in this way is certainly a minority, but I have no way to estimate the actual number in each of the two categories considered here. I consider the group I call the 'governed' a majority, on the basis of their discursive power, public profile and cultural authority, but it is quite possible that they do not constitute a numerical majority. It is possible that a majority of Aboriginal Tasmanians take an approach more like that of the individuals whose stories I have used here to develop the idea of nonconformist Aboriginalities. At present though,

main ways of seeing identity, which is to recognise that identity is dependent on engagement with difference: interaction with, and negotiation of, the differences and intersections between, in this case, a number of ‘host’ (global West, nation-state) and indigenous communities (see Clifford 1997: 250-52). Their responses are (with varying degrees of consciousness) highly dialogised and productive of subjective ambiguity. They include the narrative of displacement and dispersal and nostalgia for the metaphorical past but also multiple (local, regional, national, transnational) attachments, and an ambivalent distinctiveness *vis-a-vis* the environing ‘host’ community (see Brubaker 2005: 5-6).

The nonconformists accept the reality of the several ‘presences’ (Hall 1990: 230-36) which constitute their lives, and are prepared to live with, in interaction with, and across them. The presences are primarily those of the nation-state and the West in its various—Enlightenment, colonialist, Christian, capitalist and emancipist—dimensions, plus the Aboriginalities of political imagination and local community. The nonconformists acknowledge that they live in the West and construct their identities in a dialectical relationship with the West. They also retain, draw on and celebrate as a source of value, identity and pride, some parts of the mythic Aboriginality, be it a nostalgic longing for recovery of the past, lost spiritualism or feeling of belongingness, or, as Gill and Tara, faith in signs of enduring innate Aboriginal traits.¹⁴ They identify with these multiple locations, including the lived local community, the imagined Tasmanian, national and global indigenous, and are dialogically-aware selves.

They are immersed as participants in the contemporary heteroglossic mix of co-existent and interacting, interpenetrating and interanimating cultures, histories, discourses and languages. These are the ‘presences’ and levels of actual language use such as the ‘generic, everyday, “currently fashionable”’ (Bakhtin 1981: 49), politically correct, vernacular and formal administrative, amongst others. They are also the everyday reality of mundane interaction and the ‘random openendedness’ of accidental encounters in the common culture. This mix of symbolic worlds of

nonconformist individuals have virtually no public or political profile for their nonconformism. It is also sensible to note that these are ideal types, and that individuals do not fall neatly into either category, but in part at least adopt the stances of either at different times. Because they are exemplary, in the analysis that follows I focus mainly on the three members of the cultural elite and the educated professional man, with occasional references to others.

¹⁴ See Chapter Six, note 30.

meaning constitutes a dialogised system, in which each of the languages and felt cultures is conscious of, qualified, conditioned and inflected by the others.

The nonconformists are, as other Aboriginal Tasmanians, natives of this heteroglossia and their immersion in it is that of native speakers. As active participants in the common culture of work, mass mediated entertainment and consumption and the like, they are engaged in dialogue with multiplicity, and develop more or less conscious understandings of the particularities of each world of meaning in its own right and against the background of all the alternatives. They develop dialogised consciousnesses, an awareness ‘of competing definitions for the same things’ (Bakhtin 1981: 427) and a certain distance from, and critical perspective on, the major presences which dominate their lives.

As a result of this “‘dialectic of hybridisation”” (Mary 2005: 282; Werbner 1997) it can no longer, if it ever could, be taken for granted that any culture, language, meaning or self, including the Aboriginal and the West more generally, is identical to an originary type, nor can any be uncritically accepted as ‘authoritative or absolute’. Each is ‘de-privileged’ and ‘relativised’, made amenable to examination and moderation in the light of the others. Consistent with this, the hegemonic Aboriginality cannot continue to be the ‘privileged signifier’ of each individual’s Aboriginality. The dialogue with multiple intersecting voices, including *and* extending beyond that of the core, is the crux of the nonconformist enunciation of hybrid Aboriginal selves.

Distance and critical perspective allow the nonconformists to question the hegemonic Aboriginality, to accept at face value neither it nor its homologous or antipathetic subject positionings. Their comments above indicate that they consider the hegemonic Aboriginality as an object. Whilst nostalgically holding to a mythic originary type, they accept that that Aboriginality has passed as part of the passage of time, even while recognising the fraught nature of that passage. They see that their own Aboriginality need not be that of the hegemonic Aboriginality. In well-educated people like Tara and Andrew, this perspective is that of a mythologist’s awareness of the process of political myth-making. Tara knows that it ‘has been constructed’, and Andrew that ‘there is not much difference between the attitudes of elderly Aboriginal people and the non-

Aboriginal community', and that the politics has selectively exaggerated 'the wrong kind of' differences. He (30/10/02) thinks that:

the old guard [is] trying to hold onto power by any means possible and the old guard become conservative. You win the revolution you want to stay in power. That's Trotskyite thinking, moving into Leninism, moving into Stalinism. We're just about at the Stalinism stage now. It's happening. I mean, quite an interesting comparison actually; a mate of mine says that it happens in the gay community in Sydney, where it used to be everyone was welcome. Now, it's basically prove you're gay or a lesbian. If you're in this pub are you a gay or a lesbian?

The nonconformists can see the petty jealousies and inconsistencies associated with the politicised nature of Aboriginality, such as the acceptance by the political gatekeepers of some people after separation from their families by child removal, and the rejection of others, often on arbitrary bases such as (for Tara) family name, (for Gill) socio-economic status or (for Andrew) the degree of social interaction with the core community. Freed by heteroglossia from the tyranny of the myth (see Bakhtin 1981: 61), they are aware that they do not have to like or be like every Aborigine, or to socialise exclusively with Aborigines, in an 'Aboriginal' style, at an 'Aboriginal' pub, to *be* Aboriginal. They cut through the mystifications and see Aborigines as people:

You know, if we always say every Aboriginal is always right then we've stopped being people. Sometimes Aboriginal people are wrong and if we're not prepared to own up and say some of our people are absolute bastards, some of 'em are crims and some of 'em are wrong, then we're denying our right to be people. ... You know, I quite upset people [when] I said, "People with disabilities are some of the most manipulative, conniving people I know". They're not really nice people, but they're people and they have all the characteristics of people, one of which is being manipulative and conniving. ... [Name] does it. That's because he's a person, not because of the label you want to attach to him. When you start pretending that the label is more

important than the person that's when we have trouble (Andrew, 30/10/02).

Such a perspective is that of organic hybrids (see Bakhtin 1981: 296), that grants the potential for agency in self-construction in the form of the capacity to appreciate alternatives and determine which aspects of the major presences to reject, translate and/or adapt. The Aboriginalities of the nonconformists' personal experience and memory, similar to that with which the older cultural elite like West and Mallett identify, is, as Bakhtin (1981: 24) suggests, contrary to the authorised epic cultural memory. They modify the hegemonic Aboriginality and their own identification with it, in subtle organic ways.

They do not contribute to the romanticisation or epic heroising of the hegemonic Aboriginality but humanise it, as Mallett (2001: 43-59) did for instance in devoting a large part of her autobiography to 'restoring some dignity and humanity to our people' who she felt were objectified by early ethnological research, and by referring to practices such as necklace-making not as evidence of cultural continuity or Aboriginal legitimacy, but as personal stories of the people who make them. The nonconformists see themselves as individual people rather than as representatives of a People or Culture, and make no claims, such as to know the Dreaming or feel an other-worldly affinity with the land, which rest on the authority of the hegemonic Aboriginality. In fact they admit to inadequate knowledge of that Aboriginality, in respect of words which may (or may not) have been 'passed down from the old Tasmanian Aboriginal language', stories of place or practices (see Mallett 2001: 14, 33, 86). They do not define characteristics of 'real' Aboriginality or judge others' authenticity, but as Gill, accept that those who discover their heritage late in life and wish to learn more about it, can be considered as Aborigines. They do not deny Aboriginality to others on the basis of supposed inauthenticity, lack of communal loyalty or steadfastness through earlier times.

They reduce Aboriginal separation from others, representing Aboriginality unpretentiously, with human foibles intact,¹⁵ and working within mainstream institutions, 'break[ing] down the boundaries, between outside and inside,

¹⁵ In her book (2001: 31) Mallett tells the story of how Petticoat Bay got its name. It is named after an incident in which an old woman left her washing hanging on the bushes when she rushed off. It recalls the lived human history of small community, without ideological inflection.

between those who belong and those who do not' (Hall 1991b: 48). As instances of this attitude, Gill says 'I've never worried about Aboriginal history; it's past tense, gone, let's move on', and West stated that it is 'no good going on with hate in you',¹⁶ and (1987: 1) that she 'mixed with everyone, tried to help people of all colours and races ... as some have helped me'. Furthermore, she (1987: 81) recognised a sort of equivalence of inhumanity at Wybalenna and Port Arthur. The nostalgia these women feel for their 'homeland' is real but personal: Mallett (2001: 81) for example, indicated that she did not feel the same connection with Wybalenna as with her own locale. Additionally, they are not given to hyperbole to mythicise and establish barriers to the wider community: they do not make claims of secret-sacred knowledge, simply to make and pass on the knowledge of how to make necklaces; they do not refer to historical Aboriginal figures as 'Ancestors', nor do they mystify the wind *as* culture:

Rustles thru' my hair, caresses my brow, kisses my cheek and lips,
whispers in my ears, tickles my chin,
The wind is my friend (Mallett 2001: xvi).

These women and other nonconformists do not conceive of their Aboriginality in separatist terms, but engage as people in the everyday. Their Aboriginality is characterised by the indeterminacy and openendedness which comes with acceptance of this living contact with the unfinished, still-evolving present (Bakhtin 1981: 7). Aboriginality is to Christine (AA8) just 'part of everyday life',

never really an issue. It's just everybody's different whether they're Aboriginal or they're not Aboriginal. Everyone's different. You just accept people as they are ... there's nothing separate, we are all just normal everyday people.

These processes of engagement and adaptation produce Aboriginalities that are different from the hegemonic ideal type and that of the masquerade, not necessarily diminished. Some of the nonconformists (such as Christine) feel less Aboriginal than Australian and identify accordingly, resisting the notion of primordial roots or totality and refusing the binary distinction between and identifying as both Australian and Aboriginal. They acknowledge but are not limited to the mythic subject position or the politics associated with it. Their

¹⁶ *The Mercury* 10/9/03: 4.

Aboriginalities, and those of other nonconformists, are heterogeneous but characteristically feature a syncretism and ‘changing sameness’.

Aboriginal Tasmanians have synchronised, recoded, transformed and incorporated a number of enviroing influences, traditions and beliefs, including those of the colonial presence, as mainland Aborigine Natascha McNamara (2000: 98) has acknowledged: ‘England, its language, law and culture [has] influenced every aspect of Aboriginal ... culture’. In fact, as Memmi (1973: 21) says of Martinicans and others of the Caribbean, Aboriginal Tasmanians have been ‘subjected so completely and for such a long time’ by a range of such influences, that they do not have ‘an autonomous cultural personality’. The Tasmanians’ racial and cultural heritages, like mutton-birding or words like ‘mumly pegs’,¹⁷ are so intermingled with those of the coloniser that they are impossible to unscramble (see Nash 1995). Their worldviews and subjectivities, like the abandoned Islander or Straitsmen identities, are ‘always-already fused, syncretised, with other cultural elements ... always-already creolised’ (Hall 1990: 233). The Tasmanians are Aborigines, but also (like those of the Caribbean) ‘quintessentially Western’ (Price and Price 1997: 4).

Despite political claims of unitariness, as in ‘we were once one people’ (Mansell 18/11/2005), they are not the same as the pre-colonial aborigines of the place now called Tasmania, nor contemporary mainland Aborigines nor other indigenous people. Nor are Andrew, Tara, Gill, Kim or Ella, all of whom grew up in the city divorced from both the original locale of their antecedents and lived connection with that community, the same as the two women of the Bass Strait Islands. Each is, as Hall (1990: 227, original emphases) says of Martinicans and Jamaicans, ‘*both the same [as] and different [from]*’ those others, the hegemonic Aborigine and non-Aboriginal Tasmanians, but are so in complex ways. They share some colonial history and communal experience with some Aborigines and not others. They are similarly the same as and different from, the wider national culture.

¹⁷ See West (1987), in which she recalls this as an Aboriginal word. I have not been able to find its meaning, but a postgraduate student of Aboriginal Tasmanian languages (pers. comm., 27/09/05) thinks that it has no discernible Aboriginal linguistic characteristics and is more likely to be of European roots. It has become Aboriginal to her by local usage.

The nonconformist Aboriginal Tasmanians enunciate new styles or “‘changing” same’ (Gilroy 1991: 126; 2000: 129; see Clifford 1997: 267-68, note 19) ways of being Aboriginal. In admitting cultural interpenetration and enhancing their capacity for agency in subject formation, it is more sensible to talk of their on-going ‘positioning’ (Hall 1990: 226) *vis-a-vis* the dominating presences, rather than stable identities or subjectivities. Open to new and alternative ideas, they confront and manage contradiction, re-align and re-mix component selves, constantly re-position themselves and develop novel Aboriginalities. Any foundational identity is ‘endlessly hybridised and in process’, yet something imagined is ‘persistently there’ (Clifford 1997: 267).

What continues in their Aboriginalities is not the list of fixed ingredients like ties to the land, extended kinship, language or cultural distinctiveness claimed in the politics, nor even the ‘memories and practices’ by which collective identity is maintained (Clifford 1997: 268). Conceptions of what might continue are suggested by Paul Gilroy, Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin and Kobena Mercer. For Gilroy (1993b: 199) it is processes of identification, ways of maintaining ‘connectedness ... and evasive ... qualities that make ... diaspora conversations possible’. For the Boyarins (1993: 721) it is the historical ‘embrace of the arts of exile and coexistence’, such as the holding together but constant slippage between a multiplicity of intersecting and contradictory categories, which has allowed Jews to maintain ‘distinction as a people’ while being involved in daily converse with their others. For Mercer (1988: 63) it is the collision of, and dialogue across, difference which forms the ‘very conditions of existence’ for the black British.

These conceptions suggest that the nonconformists’ Aboriginalities exist in the dialogised sensibilities, aptitudes and practices by which they relate with, and negotiate differences between, their others, including those of their past. What defines them as Aborigines, in light of their ‘distance from a readily identifiable point of origin’ (Gilroy 1991: 122), is not that original itself,¹⁸ nor a tracking of the changes, but the effort put into maintaining and retaining traces of meaning

¹⁸ Gilroy (1991: 122) reports Miles Davis as saying that jazz ‘is over. The past is dead. Jazz is dead Why get caught up in that old shit? ... Don’t nobody tell me the way it was. Hell, I was there ... no one wanted to hear us when we were playing jazz. ... Jazz is dead, God damn it. That’s it, finito! It’s over and there’s no point in apeing the shit.’ Many of the nonconformist’s comments suggest similar thoughts about the need to move on from the authorised past and Aboriginality.

and references to the past. Their Aboriginality exists more in the invocation of particularity than in any particularity itself, the symbolic purpose of acts of tradition like collecting abalone rather than the act itself, which has little social, cultural or economic role other than to announce particularity.

Negotiation of the intersection of hegemonic and excessive selves

As outlined in the preceding chapter, other Aboriginal Tasmanians are immersed in the same presences and heteroglossic reality and live similarly mixed lives. The political elite are well-educated, materially comfortable and work collaboratively with state legislators or as administrators, and so their appreciation of, and capacity to manipulate dialogised nuances of meaning is as sophisticated as the nonconformists. They engage with difference, identify with multiple subject positions and live syncretic Aboriginalities, very much as the nonconformists. However, they apply their dialogised capacities to the task of resisting the apparent assimilatedness and political weakness of ambiguity, constructing the apparently more secure ground of a positive subalternity.

The elite adopt the notion of ethnic identity as unitary (Hall 1990: 223-25), ‘centrally defined by [a] collective histor[y] of displacement ... violent loss [and] on-going structural prejudice’ (Clifford 1997: 250-51). They constitute a ‘separatist or irredentist’ (Clifford 1997: 251) identity that gives purchase for claims on the state. They borrow from cosmopolitan and commodified global culture the ‘utopian or idealist or humanist notions of self determination and unalienated consciousness’ (Moreiras 2001: 284-85), manipulate their history to claim ‘both autochthony and a specific transregional worldliness’ and selectively preserve, recover and customise tradition (see Clifford 1997: 254, 263). This is to resist new imaginings and essentialise belonging (see Brubaker 2005: 12). This monologic approach constitutes a definitively totalising and particularist Aboriginal culture and self, which is though, an empty or floating signifier (see Laclau 1996a, 1996b) that amalgamates the heterogeneous and hybrid.

As discussed, in its covert political partnership with the state, the political elite successfully has many individuals perform this Aboriginal self. But this constructs a layer of Aboriginality that inadequately overlays and does not eliminate the other Aboriginal selves constantly being enunciated. Every

Aboriginal Tasmanian has a surfeit of self or selves that exceed the hegemonic self and persist despite the discursive, performative and disciplinary effort invested in the latter. Moreover, the constitution of the hegemonic self is achieved, in part, against the excessive selves and through their representation in the politics as assimilated, compliant, white, hybrid nothingness and less than, anti- or non-Aboriginal.

Thus the transcendent politics constitutes two dimensions of Tasmanian Aboriginality—the dominant imagined self and a lived surfeit of illegitimate selves—as differing realities and ways of being. It constitutes a split Aboriginal subject. In order to achieve an Aboriginal social identity acceptable to the political elite and the state, individuals must sustain in the masquerade the fiction of the hegemonic Aborigine and the negated contrary selves. The nonconformists on the other hand, refuse the hegemonic Aboriginality and subjectively divide and engage with the hybridising condition. They continue to identify with the former since it gives meaning in the way that Hall (1990: 224) says the ‘great African aporia’ does for Caribbean identity and as Kwame Anthony Appiah (1997: 617) says the ‘enchanted abstraction ... called Africa’ did for his father. It is a vital ‘vector of similarity and continuity’ (Hall 1990: 226) in dialogic relation with which they form their identities.

They announce their identification with the surfeit, excess or ‘residue’ (see Thiele 2005a: 13) of selves excluded, refused and negated in the performance of the hegemonic Aboriginality. They engage with those selves and interact with the differences between them and the hegemonic Aboriginal self. But it is difficult to be Aboriginal in this way in the face of the socio-political pressures arrayed against it. Their capacity to celebrate the freedom of movement implied by multiplicity is constrained (see Lo 2000: 153). They are placed in the troubling position of contrary double consciousness, similar to that faced by British-educated Nigerian “returnees” (Mary 2005: 292) and the activist black intellectuals Frantz Fanon and WEB du Bois (see Posnock 1997).

Both Fanon and du Bois were, ‘impossibly’, black intellectuals in the face of social forces constituting that double subject position as a threatening and unnatural oxymoron. Du Bois celebrated his double self, ‘flaunted his racial mixedness, his cosmopolitan multiplicity’, sought ‘to be both a Negro and an

American, without being cursed ... and a literary intellectual', and in the process 'render incoherent a need to be true to a prior essence. ... Neither "a man simply" nor only a black man, Du Bois exceed[ed] categories' (Posnock 1997: 327). Fanon too was confounded by the inadequacy to his actual self of a series of identities which history imposed upon him, from his early middle-class assumed 'white' Frenchness to his later discovery in France of his black and subaltern West Indianness, despite his education. For him (1986: 231), 'the Negro is not. Any more than the white man', and he spent his life struggling to liberate himself from the category and invent himself as a universal humanist, beyond particularity of ethnicity, culture and nationality.

Both men struggled against the equation of authentic blackness with specific values such as sensuality and primitivism, and of intellectualism with racial inauthenticity, which made their blackness and intellectualism apparently incompatible. Both refused the ideology of authenticity on which the central dichotomy between the racial particular and educated universal is based, and chose to be both. They theorised the way forward for the black and colonised to lie in the double perspective of the de-racialised ideal or universal values gained in the world of culture, though still threaded with racial particularity. For them, the way forward was to celebrate the racial particular and retain but move beyond it by engaging in the 'dialectic of the universal and the particular ... negotiating the universal through the particular and vice versa' (Posnock 1997: 333). They insisted on the need to preserve the doubleness and 'interplay of the universal and the particular' (Posnock 1997: 329).

The nonconformist Aboriginal Tasmanians struggle to negotiate a similar positioning within and without the orbit of authoritative categories and stereotypes. They feel the binarisms which position them ambiguously as the imagined unitary Aborigine while they are also live as a multiple Aborigine, the exotic outsider and the normal insider, the excluded subaltern and the mainstream citizen, of the indigenous world and of the West. They seek to enunciate nuanced, 'double-accented, double-styled' (Bakhtin 1981: 304) Aboriginal selves. They struggle against social forces that press otherwise, to enunciate complexly hybrid but unfragmented Aboriginal selves. They struggle for example, to be middle-class professional, human rights activist or social worker, Tasmanian, who just

happens to also be Aboriginal, or, equally, an Aboriginal Tasmanian who just happens, unexceptionally, to be a property developer.

These are indicative manifestations of an apparently incongruous mix of disparate elements, in the same way that 'the early medieval scholar Rabbi Sa'adya [was] an Egyptian Arab who happen[ed] to be Jewish and also a Jew who happen[ed] to be an Egyptian Arab' (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 721). They are suggestive of their complex qualities of Aboriginal-Tasmanianness and Tasmanian-Aboriginalness, that are similar to the 'complex qualities of black Britishness and British blackness' (Mercer 1988: 62) of the black British.

Further, because of the discrepancy between these complex meanings and the discursive baggage of its commonsensical use, the word 'Aborigine' describes them inadequately. Insofar as they are not the unitary ideal Aborigine, they may be considered not Aboriginal. And following the Boyarins (1993: 721), for whom bodies can be 'sometimes gendered, sometimes not', at times the descriptor 'Aboriginal' does not describe them and can be misleading. The simple 'Aborigine' diminishes their human complexity.

In introducing the invention into their existence required to achieve those selves, they refuse to 'make common cause with any single one of the existing categories that life makes available' (Bakhtin 1981: 159). They treat the relationships between their imagined and lived Aboriginalities not as of antagonism but as of contiguity, permeability, interpenetration, translation and fusion. They identify with both with a difference, transcending and dissipating fixed positions and the boundaries which separate them. They retain elements of the hegemonic Aboriginality, Andrew assuming for example, a faith in 'Aboriginal ways' of doing things or Tara 'some kind of special connection to place'. But being open to alternative worlds and meanings means that Tara can admit that such a belief is also naive, illogical and, though powerful, 'just a big myth'. She says that she has an anti-essentialist feminist philosophy which de-authorises such myth, and at the same time finds herself looking for confirmation of Aboriginality in others, for 'signifying things' like appearance, behaviours or attitudes:

I was also studying ... and most of what I've done has been very anti-essentialist and always against this idea of any inherent kind of given

quality that can't be changed. I had that on one side, but then on the other side people saying, you know, in the textbooks or the readers that we had, oh, you know, "I've always known it; it's a feeling that I've got; it's part of me," and all of that kind of stuff, and I never really knew how to balance those two feelings.

She has allowed the two to co-exist in some tension, worried over them but persisted in open-minded and open-ended investigation, allowing them to interanimate. She and other nonconformists dissolve boundaries between categories, origins and stereotypes and refuse the negation of other roots such as for example, their Scottish, Irish, English and sealer, settler, convict, soldier origins. All explore across their multiple origins and loyalties. This is to muddy the distinction between the hegemonic Aboriginality and non-Aboriginality. It breaks down the assumed monolithic character of the hegemonic Aboriginal self and its oppositional relationship with excessive selves, and allows Aboriginality to be a component of a whole self. It 'uncrowns' (see Bakhtin 1981: 23) Aboriginality as *the* master identity and allows it to inflect but not dominate differently-Aboriginal Aboriginal selves. As Andrew says:

to me, ... Aboriginality is a part of my life, it's a plus, but it's not the be all and end all of my life. The be all and end all of my life is I don't wake up first thing and think "Oh I'm Aboriginal I must go and do so and so." I wake up thinking "Oh Christ I've got to go to work or whatever." It's like gender; you don't wake up thinking instantly you're a man or a woman.

His Aboriginality is not his total self, 'nor [even] the biggest thing in [his] life'. Some others feel their Aboriginality as a 'symbolic' (Gans 1979) or merely affective ethnicity which neither organises life nor legitimately imposes obligation or constraint. The Aboriginal authentic is only relevant to them as a heritage of which they can feel proud. This suggests an infinite number of differently-Aboriginal Aboriginalities and the possibility that the unitary notion of 'Aboriginality' can be opened up in the same way as the 'continent of sexuality' (Hall 1991b: 50) and ways of being woman have been opened up.

In differing measure the nonconformists take the choices that 'middle-class whites [do, which is] to affiliate and disaffiliate at will' (Hollinger 1992: 87) and

therefore contest stereotype, as Kim's enthusiastic celebration of her subjective diversity and Ella's refusal of categorisation indicate. However, the deliberate choice of openendedness they make requires a constant de- and re-positioning of the sort which arguably defeated Fanon (see Memmi 1973) and remains difficult. They are not immune to the structured seduction and pressure which continues, nor can they escape the sociality of their identity.

For the nonconformists, the contradictions between the hegemonic Aborigine and their lived Aboriginal subjectivities remain, demonstrating Appiah's (1997) claim that such apparently contradictory identifications can co-exist. They may identify emotionally with the imagined generic and their own local Aboriginalities, with a cosmopolitan sensibility and with the state, to the extent of abiding by the rule of law (without necessarily sharing deep values). They appear to integrate their several selves in ways that transcend the political positioning and sense of victimhood in which it is invested. Unlike the governed Aborigines, there is no evidence amongst the nonconformists of a sense of loss of cultural authenticity, instability or crisis of identity, incongruity of selves or abandonment as felt by Fanon (see Memmi 1973: 20). They do not appear to be fragmented selves in crisis because of lost cultural foundations, nor do they appear to vacillate backwards and forwards, wishing to be at one with first one then another of their putative identity positions. They appear to have liberated themselves from the angst of inadequacy to the ideal, the conditional choices and the debilitating drama of the caricature, to live a 'coherent ... experiential sense of self' (Gilroy 1991: 127).

With the exception of the Lia Pootah, who have been troubled by the attempt to mount a collective political agenda, the nonconformists realise their nuanced social identities without recourse to essentialist 'passing' (see Butler 1999: 65) as black or white. They adopt an 'Aboriginal' mask in identifying with aspects of the stereotypical Aborigine, but without obscuring their multiplicity or hybridity. Their other selves are present, if secondary and of more or less relevance, ready to be brought to interaction, and evidently so. In seeking to realise an Aboriginal identity constitutively inflected by others, they use serial partial masks, permitting audiences in everyday interaction to be aware of their subjective complexities. The student who did not tell her teacher of her Aboriginality for two years neither hid

nor announced it, and acknowledged it without reserve when it became relevant. And then, she acknowledged a qualified Aboriginality, telling the class she was not, and made no claims to be, of the hegemonic type. Her Aboriginality is both partial and integrated.

As well, some (like Andrew) are empowered by age, security of heritage, formal education and experience, dialogised understanding of heteroglossia and myth, and self-reflexivity, and adept at celebrating their subtle identifications in ways which intentionally unsettle too-easy assumptions about Aboriginality and its binary distinctions. Andrew engages and disengages with both Aboriginal and wider elites and non-elites, politics and stereotypes, and challenges them both from their inside, mounting a ‘parodic travestying ... counter presentation’ (Bakhtin 1981: 54) to the Aboriginal epic and hegemonic self. He builds a nuanced personal identity that is not separate or unitary but tangentially the same as, not quite either ‘White’ or ‘Black’.

He struggles to do his job, he says, in ‘an Aboriginal way’, by which he means informally and responsively. He confers with national Aboriginal administrators in his field, and in that celebrates his identification with, and commitment to, the imagined unitary (state and national) Aboriginal communities and interests. But he also disavows the absolutism of the Aboriginal caricature by celebrating parallel ethnic and other cross-cutting identifications. He establishes with his key audiences—Aboriginal political elite, community spokespersons and students, and non-Aboriginal colleagues—that he is both Aboriginal with a difference and administrator with a difference, ‘*almost the same but not quite*’ (Bhabha 1994: 86, 89 original emphasis) either the stereotypical Aborigine or the administrator. His personal presentation, office decoration and aforementioned Cape Barren trip distinguish him and indicate the complexity of his self-identification and intent that it have political impact.

On the Cape Barren trip he dressed as the standard ‘white administrator’ knowing that his critics in the Aboriginal community consider that to be an attempt to *be* white, but using his dress to subtly disavow that stereotypical equation. He was aware on the basis of his native dialogised awareness that the local Aboriginal community would have expectations of him as a government officer; he was also aware that his colleagues would hold the urban and colonialist

assumption that, it being a provincial community, the day on the Island was to be more casual, less serious than their routine. In the event, he satisfied community expectations of him as an Aboriginal administrator, showed sensitivity and respect for community perspectives, subtly ironised his colleagues' colonialist assumptions and disidentified himself from them.

He successfully accomplished his complex identity as a government officer with a difference and an Aboriginal man with a difference. He undermined the equation of his not-quite-Aboriginality with whiteness and established an identity as *'almost the same but not white'* (Bhabha 1994: 89, original emphasis). In his routine self-presentation, he consolidates the mixed partial subject positioning that such 'slippages' of differences (Bhabha 1994: 90) make available. He ensures that he will not be mistaken for being simply an Aborigine, nor simply a white man, nor a man simply, but a complex Aboriginal-Tasmanian professional man. Moreover, in a political context which de-authorises such parody, he regularly consciously confronts his audiences with the meanings of his actions and the challenge they pose, not to discredit the old but to provoke new ways of thinking and being Aboriginal. His is an exemplary instance of nuanced creole Aboriginal sensibility and positioning, an echo of the title of Ida West's autobiography.

The radicalism and gift of the nonconformists

To identify in complex and hybrid ways, the nonconformists negotiate the hegemonic politics with some success. They are 'organic' hybrids, 'pregnant with potential for new world views' (Bakhtin 1981: 360) and challenge to the 'basic code' (Guha 1983: 36) that governs Aboriginal Tasmanians. In this section I use Alberto Moreiras's (2001) attempt to retrieve hybridity thinking from its hegemonic co-option and articulation—as a grossly categoric 'cultural difference' or 'diversity' that makes real-world heterogeneity knowable—and its positioning as 'the Other' that secures the hegemonic order, to re-examine the personal praxes achieved by the nonconformists and the potential they offer for a *post*-identity Aboriginal politics that is, though not easy, less problematic than the current identarian politics.

Drawing on the work of a number of theorists, Moreiras begins that retrieval by arguing that subalternity is not primarily difference from hegemony, but 'a

correlate to it' (2001: 296, note 6). For him, the relationship between the hegemonic forces of global capitalism, neo-liberalism and democracy and the subaltern local, particular and different, is less one of antithesis than of mutual interpenetration and hybrid co-constitution. This is consistent with the theorising of Derrida (1978, 1982, 1987), Hall (1990, 1991a, 1991b), Bhabha (1994) and Gilroy (1993a, 1993b), and empirical studies of for example, Macedonian identity (Cowan 2001), Hawai'ian women's rights (Merry 2001), female genital circumcision (Dembour 2001), Thai child prostitution (Montgomery 2001) and South Asian migrants in Britain (Baumann 1996). It is also consistent with the case of the Aboriginal Tasmanians.

He argues that to be relevant in such situations, a politics of subalternism must articulate doubly with the hegemonic, that is, be within but at the same time 'stand outside' it (Moreiras 2001: 267), and that to do so it must adopt a simultaneous 'radical negativity and tactical positivity' (Moreiras 2001: 285). It can take this stance by adopting a double register of thinking with regard to subalternism, considering the full implications of the ubiquitous actual mutual imbrication of particularity and universality and sameness and difference. Moreiras proposes that an effective politics of subalternism must mobilise a 'savage' or 'radical' hybridity that incorporates a double register of thinking.

The first, positive, register of the double articulation in savage hybridity, on which the ability to work *within* hegemonic politics rests, is based on Spivak's strategic essentialism, Walzer's (1994) 'thick' particular culture and morality and Balibar's (1995) "'fictitious or total universality'" (see Moreiras 2001: 282). The positive register suspends any notion of subaltern heterogeneity and accepts thick particularisms of culture and morality as givens, as foundational and discrete, and entire unto themselves (see Walzer 1994). It also accepts as givens the universals—legal and ethical values such as equality, non-discriminatory justice, democratic freedom and self-determination—that are formally espoused as the goals of the state itself.

Most subaltern politics, including that of the Aboriginal Tasmanians, works within this register, concentrating its effort on securing its own particularity, critiquing the state on the basis of its failure to live up to its own progressive and Eurocentric ideals and negotiating on the basis of (what it perceives as *cross-*

cultural) ‘thin’ abstractions of thick moralities that are external to them. This may be a necessary strategy but it limits the scope of subaltern politics and ‘cannot transcend the parameters given by the hegemonic structure itself’ (Moreiras 2001: 283).

The negative register, on which the potential of savage hybridity and the possibility of being at least in part *without* hegemonic politics rests, works with a minimalist or thin interpretation of the positive register. In this register, the thick cultural particularisms and total universalisms are seen to be theoretical fictions, and to be, in fact, hybrids. Each is seen to be always already interpenetrated by, ‘crossed through with thin interferences’ (2001: 282) and to share something in common with other thick cultures’ and moralities’ manifestations of similar notions. Balibar (1995) thinks of the minimal or trace elements thus shared as ‘ideal’ or ‘unconditional’ universals. The negative register also recognises that ‘there is no choice between’ the local and global, the particular and universal or identity and difference, because ‘each pole of the antagonism is inherent to its opposite, so that we stumble upon it at the very moment when we endeavour to grasp the opposite pole for itself, to posit it “as such”’ (Zizec, cited in Moreiras 2001: 277). That is, the local and global, particular and universal, sameness and difference are coextensive.

This means that there is within all particularisms, localisms and identities, some element of ideal or ‘unconditional’ universality and therefore the grounds of both a critical scepticism regarding the totalising particularities of the positive register, and of ‘some open or latent insurrection’ in regard to them (Moreiras 2001: 282). This perspective allows furthermore, the fictitious universals to be defined, justified or proven in their negation, and so the minimalist unconditional universals provide a more rigorous test of particularist claims than the totalising fictitious universals. Equality, for example, can be defined as the absence of discrimination and freedom the absence of coercion. These dimensions of the negative register grant it the potential to, unlike the positive register, stand outside hegemonic closures.

Savage hybridity is the radicalisation of this thinking of negativity. It refuses the grounding proffered by the subaltern self, the antagonistic relationship with the state and the totalising identities of cultural ‘difference’ or ‘diversity’, because

they are the foundational negation, antinomy or empty signifier (see Moreiras 2001: 291-94; Laclau 1996)—by which the systematicity of the hegemonic chain of differences between particularisms, and thence all identities and the hegemonic order, are constituted. That is, the notional subaltern self is the impossible base place-holder in the chain of self-referential particularisms, the constitutive negativity providing closure and ultimate foundation for identity. But it has within it elements of universality that destabilise or subvert the neat specificity of any difference, and so is ‘a ground that does not [in fact] ground’ (Moreiras 2001: 293).

What the hegemonic subaltern self does in fact, is secure the hegemonic order and so the subalterns’ marginalisation. In order to avoid being forever subjected as the Other, the ‘excluded, left over, ... remainder’ (Moreiras 2001: 286), subaltern politics must not then, as it does in Tasmania, posit difference (since that provides the system with its foundational negation and confirms their subjection) but must destabilise the hegemonic system of differences which interpellates the subaltern as cultural difference. It can do so by refusing to be any stable or knowable substantive difference, and such a politics is made possible by savage hybridity, which ‘does not sometimes allow for identity and sometimes for difference’ but engages ‘simultaneously and distinctly’ with a radical negativity and tactical positivity (Moreiras 2001: 285). A politics of savage hybridity must exist at this aporetic point, where the potential for Aboriginal negation coincides with its potential enunciation and growth (see Moreiras 2001: 294), where it may engage the state in supporting a foundational ambiguity.

This is the double register of thinking, the hybridity of undecidable otherness that nonconformists like Andrew, Kim, Tara and the women of the Aboriginal cultural elite live; certainly not the denigrated hybridity or celebrated diversity of the progressivist hegemony. Theirs is an individualised, heterogeneous and ambivalent difference that rejects all totalising identity positions. In them, the particular and the universal, the local and the global coexist, as do Aboriginality, Whiteness and Australianness. They identify with changing-same Aboriginalities, accommodating a certain positive faith in vestigial elements of the hegemonic Aboriginality without adopting a lost or reclaimed sovereign Aboriginal self. They (minimally, that is on the basis of unconditional universalities) avoid judging

others' essentialist particularistic claims. They (negatively) situate themselves in tangential relationships with both the state and Aboriginal elite: of but not entirely of the margin, and of but not entirely of the centre.

Their transcendence of distinct identity and difference is reflected in their transcendence of division and bitterness. They do not just cross totalising identity positions, but exceed and show the inadequacy or unreality of category and boundary. They reveal that there is no grounding in separate culture or antagonistic relationship to 'cross'. They show the unlimited capacity for selfhood beyond the borders of any totalising ideal-typical self. And, as suggested by the title of West's autobiography, their emotional responses to hegemony are beyond jealousy, bitterness, anger and hatred, and thus show the possibility of something else, beyond limitation and divisiveness. They hold together, in and alongside each other, albeit in some tension, their local (Islander or other regional) Aboriginality and the global which inhabits it (such as Christianity), their particularity and the trace universals incorporated within it. Indeed their lives represent a renunciation of the ideological totalities of state and Aboriginal politics, and the possibility of something else besides.

This precarious radical undecidability is what the dialectic of state and identity politics seeks to domesticate by its theoretical fictions: to 'suspend the heterogeneity of subaltern consciousness in order to postulate a unified field of subaltern consciousness' (Moreiras 2001: 284) or, that is, the transcendental and innocent Aborigine that permits an effective politics of identity. A radically hybrid subaltern politics dwells simultaneously in both registers of thinking above, and positions itself 'neither inside nor outside the history of Western domination but in a tangential relation to it' (Moreiras 2001: 290), from which it 'simultaneously undermines both identarian and differential positions' (Moreiras 2001: 291). It critiques the hegemonic claims, goals and mechanisms of state and Aboriginal politics on the grounds of their inadequacy to unconditional universals. It can reveal the 'irreducible heterogeneity within [the apparently homogeneous history of the] core' (Moreiras 2001: 286), challenge hegemony's claims to unity and universality, and 'unwork' or 'unconceal' its workings.

In their private lives and insofar as they take part in communal political struggles, the nonconformists engage in a tactical positivity, suspending a

comprehensive critique of particularism and mounting a critique of the state's failure to achieve its universals of democracy, equality, freedom, self-determination and non-discriminatory justice. As the situation of the governed attests though, such a position can lead, via counter-reification, to entrapment within the hegemonic frame. The negative register corrects this by also critiquing on minimalist grounds the hegemonic particularism of solidary collective identity and difference, so undermining the grounds of hegemonic control.

The nonconformists' simultaneous operation in both registers confounds the hegemonic politics and allows individuals to negotiate the politics with some success. It allows them to avoid the pitfalls of a 'fatalist idealism' that faith in particularity alone can produce and a paralyzing nihilism of negativist thinking alone. It allows them to engage in hegemonic politics from the inside but avoid adopting any already determined particularism as if it were unique. A subalternist politics modelled on their negotiation could deconstruct the certain Aboriginal difference, and its counter-productivity, and so unwork Aborigines' hegemonic subjection. The nonconformists' perspective may also allow a politics to get beyond the dominant current concern with identity and difference to focus on social inequality (see Gilroy 1993a: 223).

Unfortunately, even in its current inchoate state and despite its relevance to Aboriginal lives, this heterogeneity poses a threat to the political equilibrium and issues of abyssal aporia to individuals. Because individuals and identities 'are often dislocating in relation to one another' (Hall 1992: 31), the heterogeneity fragments politically-constructed collective cohesiveness. It appears to abandon the most effective point of leverage with the state and dissolve (see Melucci 1997: 65) the Aboriginality on which ontological security seems to rest. It seems to imply surrender before the imperialistic Western presence. The sense of danger and threat it presents is captured in Hall's (1990: 233-34) question: 'How can we stage this dialogue [with the dominant West] so that finally, we can place it, without terror or violence, rather than being forever placed by it? Can we ever recognise its irreversible influence, whilst resisting its imperialising eye?'

The nonconformists confront these dangers via their 'transversal' (Yuval-Davis 1997b: 203-06) personal politics: immersed in daily contact and mixedness, they engage with, 'organis[e] and giv[e] shape to heteroglossia, without denying

or eliminating it' (Werbner 1997a: 8). They confront the abyss, 'sustaining dialogues across differences of ideology, culture, identity and social positioning', refusing a totalising Aboriginality that might legitimate their actions and holding onto 'changing same' Aboriginalities. They look the fact of the emergence of 'The Aboriginal Tasmanians' from the collision of the dominant Aboriginal and Western co-presences 'in the face' and 'reckon with' it (see Hall 1990: 231). They accept and negotiate the irreversible influence of the imperialising eye and 'stage' their relationships with both, without being finally 'placed' or entirely governed by either.

This is accomplished via the complex mix of 'rootedness' and 'shiftingness' that is critical, according to Yuval-Davis (1997b: 205), to 'the transversal perspective'. If their individual approaches are considered as a whole, the nonconformists suggest the broad outlines of what could become a post-identity politics. A collective politics modelled on their individual politics would, for example, nurture a sense of rootedness in Aboriginality, and this suggests the continuing relevance of some political activism. That activism could no longer though, nurture identification with Aboriginality as if it existed autonomously, outside discourse, power and social interaction. It would be a qualified and changing Aboriginality, a local, lived experience that recalls a set of syncretic origins and historical narratives, idealised values and structures and stories of the complexities of the constitutive relationship with the dominant other.¹⁹ Rootedness in this kind of Aboriginality would continue to matter, as it does for the nonconformists, as sentimental identity attachment, legitimacy in the world, base for cognitive mappings and point of departure for agency.

A collective transversal politics would also nurture similarly critically-understood rootedness, implying affiliation with and commitment to multiple others, such as regional, Tasmanian and Australian communities. It would recognise the relational and processual nature of identification, and its existence as the mundane condition of Aboriginal Tasmanian lives, by nurturing respect for the constitutive relationships of dialogue and exchange across the boundaries with others. This is the capacity for 'shiftingness', the necessary ability to move between identity and difference (Yuval-Davis 1997b: 205). A transversal politics

¹⁹ This is what Noel Pearson has done with his own heritage; see Pearson 2006b, 2006c, 2007d.

would accept, as the nonconformists (and others, see Pearson 2000) do, the reality of the enviroing aporetic conditions and engage in active interaction with, and negotiation of, them from within the deep relationships with them.

Accordingly, it would work not to obscure, obstruct or control, but institutionalise channels of mutually ‘altruistic’²⁰ communication with that otherness. The notion of altruism implies a responsibility to respect others’ right to exist in their alterity and its application would facilitate comprehensive, principled and informed engagement in relations of conversation, partnership, respectful debate and disagreement, and in turn the processes of dialogic negotiation from which the nonconformists enunciate their nuanced, radically-ambivalent positioning. This processual understanding of identification *vis-a-vis* the dominant society can itself then complement or replace ‘cultural content’ conceptions of Aboriginality, as that with which Aborigines identify and in which they find solidarity.

Such a project would facilitate multiple secure identifications, and informed, confident and self-reflexive interaction across the boundaries between them, and thence a nuanced, indeterminate otherness. It would depend on the radical mix of Aboriginalities being accepted as legitimate and constant identity innovation. Given its actor-centric dimension, it would depend too, on Aboriginal individuals having the dialogised capacity to critically examine the worlds of meaning within which they are immersed. Thus a post-identity political project would work to enhance individuals’ capacity to read the several discourses ‘against the grain’, to ‘learn to live with a multiple sense of self’ and to ‘take responsibility’ for the choices they must make in identification (Melucci 1997: 65).

Conclusion

In this chapter the argument has been that the nonconformists are highly significant representative individuals who take a stance that is radically opposed to, and enables them to exceed, the governing politics and its problems. One outcome of their approach is to reveal the actuality of an infinite number of differently-Aboriginal Aboriginalities, of which others might take advantage. It

²⁰ Emmanuel Levinas’s notion. See Werbner 1997b: 227 and Sedgwick 2001, especially Section Four.

has been argued that the nonconformists' approach to their Aboriginality has the potential to expose and unwork both the Aboriginal politics and the practices of state which frame it. To this point the impact of such a politics, where and how it might be felt at the state and/or global level has not been considered. The chapter has revealed how the Aboriginal political elite has profited by its creative response to the conditions of possibility imposed on Aborigines on the basis of progressive liberal rights which accrue to a 'stable same' Aboriginal difference. Informed by this analysis, the final chapter develops a critique of that rights agenda as it is institutionalised in the national multicultural accommodation.

Conclusion: Accommodating Post-Identity Aboriginalities

Introduction

This study has investigated Aboriginal Tasmanian claims that public policy, programs and service delivery are assimilatory because they are inappropriate to their Aboriginality, that they are as a result ineffective, disempowering and marginalising, and that they should, as a matter of right and social justice, respond with greater sensitivity to Aboriginal cultural particularity. The study has found that Aboriginal Tasmanians are less markedly different from other Tasmanians than is apparent in public policy discourse, in educational discourse-in-practice and in Aboriginal political discourse and masquerade. It has found that the problem they articulate is at root a product of the progressive approach to Aboriginal governance.

The study has found that that approach rests on a number of convenient but simplistic understandings of Aboriginality, including an essentialist categorical culture that is internally homogeneous and dichotomously different from an equally monolithic mainstream Australian culture, a unitary subject that is metonymically representative of Aboriginal culture, and the notion that Aboriginal marginalisation is the direct product of the colonial dispossession and on-going institutional ethnocentrism and racism. The approach rests on that unidirectional causal logic and on the understanding that, having been lost or degraded in the colonial encounter and its aftermath, recovery of cultural integrity and identity security is the key to Aborigines' self-confidence and capacity to engage with education and the wider society, and so to their achievement of social equality. Rights are accorded on these bases. In the main, those understandings have been taken up and promoted by Aboriginal political elites and form the basis of Aboriginal Tasmanian political strategy. These notions now constitute a hegemonic discourse and the orthodox political and administrative approach to Aboriginal affairs in Tasmania.

The discourse is manipulated in the normalising processes that occur routinely—intentionally and unintentionally—in education, via the talk and behaviour of senior administrators and school staff, and Aboriginal leaders and students themselves. Those processes confront individuals with sets of conditional

choices that make it difficult for them to identify, feel and gain social acceptance as both Aborigines and citizens, even while they are so. The processes induce in many the performance of a contrary, subaltern Aboriginality and the compromise of capabilities for living across difference they actually have. Thus the problems of alienation and marginalisation alluded to in Aboriginal complaints are partly the product of the joint progressivist/Aboriginalist hegemony. The research has also found that some individuals refuse to be dominated by the binary simplicity and uni-dimensionality of the orthodoxy, exercise the capabilities that others direct elsewhere, and successfully negotiate the problematic positioning that that orthodoxy produces. In doing so, they exceed the discursive constrictions, realise ambiguously different Aboriginalities and manage to combine, reasonably seamlessly, participatory citizenship and Aboriginality.

In examining these dynamics in Tasmania, the study has constituted an examination of the discursive framework of the multicultural accommodation as it applies to Aborigines nationally. It is clear in the empirical literature that in its approach to Aboriginal education, Tasmanian schooling is significantly shaped by national educational discourse. That discourse features distinct learning styles and culturally appropriate schooling in policy statements such as the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (NATSIEP) (Commonwealth of Australia 1989), and iconic dimensions of Aboriginal education like Aboriginal Studies (Hollinsworth 1992c; 1992d; 1995; Craven 1999), two-way schooling (Harris 1990; Christie 1985), cross-cultural awareness training (Hollinsworth 1992b; Young 1999) and the preferential employment of Aboriginal staff (Hughes and Willmot 1982). These feature in the national approach to Aboriginal education just as they do in Tasmania. The bases of this approach in education also mirror those of the larger public policy framework, which is similarly dominated by discourse of Aboriginal self-determination (Jenkins 2002; Rowse 2002) and cultural appropriateness (Rowse 2000b).

This chapter reviews the Tasmanian case study and extrapolates from it to consider the governance of Aboriginality nationally, within the larger national policy framework. The first section of the chapter outlines the socio-cultural dynamics associated with the normalising pressures of liberal governance (which are, as in Tasmania, reinforced by overtly oppositional but covertly allied

Aboriginal normalising pressures) and their unintended consequences. Those consequences are highly problematic, though as suggested above, some individuals successfully negotiate the conditions and liberate themselves from their constraining consequences to realise balanced, integrated and relatively untroubled Aboriginal citizenships. The second section of the chapter examines those individuals and their negotiation strategies, thus highlighting the intercultural complexities denied in the orthodox accommodation of Aboriginal difference.

The third and final section of the chapter considers the possibility of an accommodation that nurtures liberated, engaged Aboriginal citizens. That consideration is informed by the knowledge of the complexities of Aborigines' simultaneous identifications, a balance of Aboriginal group and individual rights that is more appropriate to that complexity, and policy options sufficiently flexible to cater to it. It illustrates the possibilities with some current and possible further adjustments, and proposes that the theorisation provides an organising rationale that may guide coherent change into the future.

Governed Aboriginalities and the conditions of their existence

The dominant public policy approach to Aboriginal affairs in Australia has for forty years been to provide, as of cultural right, the means by which Aborigines may recover the integrity of their lost cultures, languages, lands, law, governance structures, political voice and identities (Pearson 2000; 2007a: 25-7; Rowse 2000a; 2000b: 1515-16; 2002; Sutton 2001: 132-33, 151). This progressive approach to Aboriginal governance has been based on the expectation that that recovery would ensure Aboriginal resilience in their management of the relationship with the supposedly culturally alien institutions of the dominant society, and thence their recovery of social, mental and physical health. The approach responds to the claim that the application of state policy has unjustly constrained Aboriginal capacity to live their lives according to their own customs and practices and that this treatment has resulted in their social marginalisation.

This approach has been predicated on a number of understandings inherited from colonial discourse, early anthropological research and administrative practice (see Meucke 1982; Cowlishaw 1986; Attwood 1989; 1992a: i-xi; Wolfe 1991;

Hollinsworth 1992a; Rowse 1992a) that conceived of Aboriginal culture in functionalist and modernist terms as relatively whole, fixed, autonomous, internally coherent, bounded (Hinkson and Smith 2005; Redmond 2005: 234; Sullivan 2005), and both oppositional and civilisationally inferior to that of the colonisers (Lattas 1987; 1990; Goldie 1988; McConnochie *et al.* 1989: 64-6; Jacobs 1994: 33). The approach to Aboriginal policy has retained this tradition of thought (Sullivan 2005: 186) with two refinements: it has conceived of Aboriginal culture as romantically superior to the ecological irresponsibility and alienated individualism of the West (Sackett 1991; Sandall 2001; Rowland 2004; see Canning 1978), and of Aborigines as innocent victims of the destructive imposition of colonial and settler-Australian culture (Keeffe 1988: 68-72; Tyler 1993: 327). The approach has also conceived of Aboriginal individuals as the same as each other, unitary selves metonymically representative of their culture (Thiele 1991b: 180, 190, 194). In these ways, policy has inverted but retained the binarism that underpinned earlier thought (see Pearson 2007a: 28).

Progressive policy has implemented reparative policies of cultural preservation and social equity on these bases, and sought to facilitate Aboriginal self-determination and render services ‘culturally appropriate’ (Rowse 2000b: 1515-516) in order that they may ameliorate the disadvantage caused by cultural difference unmet in ethnocentric institutions. Examples of the approach include those in education above and, more widely, the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP),¹ the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme,² the formation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)³ and the passing and operation of the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976⁴ and the Native Title Act 1993.⁵

¹ See Rowse 2002: 9, 25-35.

² This scheme began in the mid 1970s in response to increasing welfare support in remote Australia. It provided funds to community organisations to pay for part-time employment as replacement for standard unemployment benefits and provision of training. See Sanders and Morphy 2004; Rowse 2002: 65-78.

³ See Rowse 2002: 181-203.

⁴ See Fingleton 1996a; 1996b.

⁵ Hollinsworth (1996: 115) writes that, with the Mabo judgement, the passing of that Act ‘can be read as marking the success of indigenous groups in obtaining special status as a people within Australian constitutional and administrative systems.’ Sullivan (2005: 191) says that the operation of the Act in the Rubibi case ‘required demonstration of a “traditional” culture separate and distinct from non-Indigenous culture’. See also Tonkinson 1999: 134; Hinkson and Smith 2005: 158.

Such policies and programs categorise, typify and separate Aboriginality out from the rest of the population and are, as in Tasmanian education, in part a product of the governing imperative of normalisation. In them, the pre-modern traditional is valorised as the authentic expression of Aboriginal culture and self and other forms, like those of the half-caste or urbanised, are diminished on the grounds that their Aboriginality is degraded or lost (see Povinelli 1988; 2002). The attempt to provide culturally appropriate service in such programs is predicated on the former Aboriginality as an ideal typical subject position, which is rewarded with special esteem, rights, concessions and resources.

In parallel, in mainstream policies and programs an opposed ideal type, that of the good Australian citizen, which implies normalcy, modernity and individuality is valorised and rewarded with full social inclusion. In mainstream services, as has been seen in Tasmanian education, the two ideal types are routinely discursively juxtaposed. This logic of separate and opposed essentialist cultures and ideal subject types was crystallised in the notion of the ‘double bind’, as articulated by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC):

In many ways, schooling represents a double bind for Aboriginal people. [It] is a means by which specific types of knowledge and certain values are reproduced. For the most part, these are derived from non-Aboriginal society. Schooling is therefore almost inevitably assimilationist in the sense of providing Aboriginal people with ideas, attitudes and values which are not derived from their own culture. If, however, they do not participate in schooling they are denied access to many of the skills and resources which are required for building the type of future which many Aboriginal people say they want—a future in which they have much greater control over the circumstances of their lives (RCIADIC 1991b: 300).

The logic of binary difference between cultures suffuses the report (RCIADIC 1991a: 335-36, 350-51) and a number of developments in education around the same period, many of which were influenced by progressive thought in general and the findings and recommendations of the RCIADIC. Illustrative examples include the aforementioned ‘two way’ and bilingual schooling, Aboriginal Studies curriculum, cross-cultural awareness training, support for parental involvement in

schooling via Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness (ASSPA) committees, and the Aboriginalisation of staffing in Aboriginal Studies and more widely in administration. The RCIADIC was also influential in other areas of government service provision, including health and welfare.

The key ideas on which these developments were and are based, as above and centring on cultural difference and minority group rights, have been central to the dominant public policy paradigm in the constitutional democracies of the West since the Second World War.⁶ They have become naturalised to such an extent that commentators from different ideological perspectives can now easily, without explicit argument, propose for example, that integration in the national society amounts to giving up the right to cultural autonomy (McMullan 2008), that those who depart from either ideal type are fatefully troubled by a 'tend[ency] to lack established cultural bases and secure identities' (Pearson, C. 2008) and that 'feelings of hurt and despair' amongst Aborigines must be addressed with 'culturally appropriate services' (Calma 2008), or portray criticism of progressive policy as racist (Greer 2008: 47).

As students and as citizens, Aboriginal Tasmanians and Australians are immersed in these discursive conditions and routinely pressed by the mix of inducement and negative sanction attached to the opposed ideal types, to conform to mutually exclusive subject positions. They are pressed to choose *either* cultural authenticity (with a consequential marginalising departure from the normal), *or* normality and equality (with a consequential loss of cultural integrity and security of identity).⁷ That is, the processes of normalisation impose a conditional choice between dichotomous poles of attraction: identity or equality, Aboriginality or Australianness, liminality or citizenship. These processes press for decision in favour of the latter term in each pair and make it difficult for Aborigines to

⁶ This approach to internal cultural minorities was influenced by the events of the Second World War and subsequent developments such as the Civil Rights and Red power movements in the US and progressive political theory (see Kukathas 1992: 105-107; Pearson 2007a: 28; Turner 2007).

⁷ Tonkinson (2007: 51-2) suggests that the policies of the Howard government imply a conditional choice between culture, welfare dependency and social dysfunction on the one hand and out-migration and loss of culture on the other. Thiele (1991b: 192, 194-95) argues that the binarism and idea of cultural *loss*, both of which are important in constituting the conditional choice on which normalisation depend, are the product of functionalist reifications of Aboriginal culture and groupness, which make multiplicity and change difficult.

consider themselves, and be considered by others as both authentically Aboriginal *and* normal, to be that is, participatory Aboriginal citizens.

Aboriginal political opportunism

Institutionalised, these hegemonic perceptions have produced conditions of which Aboriginal political leaders have taken advantage in Tasmania and on the Australian mainland. By granting a 'commanding voice' (Sen 2006: 77) to certain persons who are equipped, perchance, to take advantage of the opportunities, they have prompted the development of a political elite that is largely urban (Keesing 1989: 23; Tonkinson 1999: 137; Kukathas 1992: 113; Sutton 2001: 131) but has its parallels in the remote communities (Holcombe 2005), and has fostered the desired cultural distinctiveness (see Crough and Cronin 1996: 8-9; Sullivan 2005: 191; Turner 2007: 120-21). In what is presented as a cultural salvage operation, political leaders have adopted and elaborated a primordial solidary culture and 'solitarist' self (Sen 2006: xii), building on the *tabula rasa* of pre-contact culture, embellishing traces of originary cultures and forming the distinctive but 'deliberately vague and undifferentiated "tradition"' (Tonkinson 1999: 140, 144) and the features of a mythic bounded and fixed pan-Aboriginality.

This response has been an expression of Aboriginal agency. It has 'replicate[d] forms of social association observed by the earliest colonial anthropologists' (Sullivan 2005: 192), and done so in order to conform to administrative expectations (Fingleton 1996b: 8-9; see Jacobs 1988) and to thereby secure recognition and constitute subjects to whom the state has determined rights will attach. That is, it has been to use progressive thought as a basis of political claim, as has been done throughout the history of human rights discourse (Hunt 2007). And it has been consistent with the invention of tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992; Tonkinson 1993, 1997) and 'celebration of fossilised and fetishised cultures' (Keesing 1989: 31) in post- and counter-colonial contexts in the Pacific (Linnekin 1983; Handler and Linnekin 1984; Hanson 1989; Keesing 1989; Sissons 1993) and the Americas (Jackson 1989; Kroeber 1992; Nagel 1995). In Australia it has produced a politics built on a master discourse of a shared past and a oneness with Aboriginalities characterised by 'idealise[d] primitivity' (Keesing 1989: 23) and thick custom (Tonkinson 1999: 139-41).

Though this political strategy takes on different nuances according to locale, context and need (see Tonkinson 1999: 141; Glowczewski 1998), the overarching project enmeshes its Aboriginal subjects in a dialectic of a ‘captivated’ or ‘colonised mind’ (Sen 2006: 91, 92; see Keesing 1989: 23, 25 *and passim*). Just as the state has constructed a monolithic Aboriginal Other for governing purposes, so the politics invests in an anti-colonial ‘reactive culturalism’ (Shachar 2001: 35-7) in which whiteness, colonialism, modernity, Australianness and citizenship are conflated to form a monolithic and antagonistic West (see Keesing 1989). That investment in dichotomy has also meant the representation of the authentic Aboriginal self as the avatar of authentic culture, resistant victim to the oppression of the Western Other, thus allowing the manipulation of white guilt surrounding the colonial past (Pearson 2007a; see also Thiele 1991b: 185-86, 188).

These constructions are the product of long processes of selective adoption, modification and editing, cross-fertilisation with Western philosophy and incorporation of anthropological reifications of culture (Keesing 1989; Wolfe 1991; Sullivan 2005), as a result of which Aboriginal identity politics has become deeply invested in the progressive policy logic, including monolithic Aboriginality, cultural dichotomy and the notion that Aboriginal marginalisation, social dysfunction and subjective disturbance are uni-linearly the legacy of colonisation and marginalisation of difference. Consistent with those notions of culture and identity too, it is invested in the dire threat of cultural loss and identity in-between-ness, and the expectation that renewal of originary culture is the prime means of recovering Aboriginal health and well-being. As suggested above, this largely shared investment generates a normalising binary that inverts that of the state and presses Aborigines to make a decision opposed to that sought by the state—to choose Aboriginal authenticity—which serves to exaggerate the contradictory pressures imposed by state governing normalisation. Thus, Aborigines are governed by the opposed poles of attraction and repulsion presented them by authoritative state and Aboriginal interests.

The indentarian multicultural accommodation

These identity dynamics have produced the key truths of contemporary Aboriginality and tenets of the multicultural accommodation as it applies in

respect of Aborigines: solidary bounded culture, unitary identity, dichotomous difference, individual as cultural cipher, externally-caused victimhood and priority of cultural renewal. Relevant public policy determined on those bases has proven useful to national and provincial governments and to Aboriginal political interests. The administrative state has gained control of a disparate and previously ‘unknown’ population, while Aboriginal communities and organisations have gained title to land, jurisdictional autonomy, public voice, symbolic reparation and material compensation, which have had positive impacts (see Tonkinson 2007: 46; Morgan 1994: 229). The ethnocentrism which has historically imbued public policies, programs and service delivery has been moderated, and programs of affirmative action have ameliorated disadvantage and facilitated the emergence of an Aboriginal middle-class.

However, the essentialist identitarianism of the accommodation has set in train powerful social forces that have negative consequences for Aborigines and the nation. It has provided conditions which have Aboriginal political leaders collude in constituting what Aborigines are supposed to be—either Aborigines or citizens but not both—and so locking them into a mutually exclusive choice between culture and citizenship. The processes by which Aborigines’ actual dual consciousness is constituted as prohibitively problematic are outlined in the rest of this first section of the chapter.

The narcissism of minor difference, masquerade and lop-sided realities

Michael Ignatieff (1997: 35-40; see also Hobsbawm 1996: 41) argued that it was almost impossible to distinguish Serbs from Croats before the war in Yugoslavia in 2000, but that minor ethno-religious differences were elevated in importance to such an extent that they brought about civil war. A similar if less extreme exaggeration has occurred in Aboriginal affairs. The ideal typical Aboriginal culture is a caricature or hyperreal simulation of aboriginal cultures, composed of retrospectively imagined and selectively elaborated traces of ‘classical’ pre-contact (Sutton 2001: 134, 136) cultures, compounded with ‘recently developed and consciously contrived’ (Rowse 2000b: 1530) social and cultural forms.

What is constructed in the politics as the basis of claims on, and in response to the demands of the state, is a mythicised version of pre-contact aboriginal

cultures, much like Robin Hood or King Arthur (see Westwood and Simpson 2005). It is a caricature, with little of the antecedent cultures' constitutional tensions or coercive realities (Sutton 2001: 152, notes 63-70) and infused with Western idealisations and borrowings from Native American ideologies (Keesing 1989: 30; Welch 2002). It elides Aboriginal (and Torres Strait Islander) agency in their negotiation of the colonial relationship (Birmingham 1992; Jones 2007; Nakata 2007: 195-208; Russell 2007), incorporation of colonialist constructions of Aboriginality (Wolfe 1991: 216), formation of workable reconciliations⁸ and voluntary integration. The caricature Aboriginality has none of this historical complexity and in fact obscures the intercultural intersection (Sutton 2001: 127-34), borrowing and hybridisation that continues to produce contemporary Aboriginality.⁹

The simulation or ideal-typical Aboriginal culture has little in common with the incessant interactivity (Merlan 2005: 178-79) of contemporary demotic interculturality and social change which mean that Aborigines neither share a distinct lifestyle, belief system or social institutions, nor constitute a singular self-conscious group. They are not isolated from other Australians or the national community, but are deeply integrated in webs of relations at the intersection of several cultural 'presences' (Hall 1990: 230-37) in the heteroglossic national and global social worlds. Many have settler forbears, live with settler partners and families (Birrell 2000; Birrell and Hirst 2002) and share their intimate concerns with them, and their young people share their mediated experience—witness the

⁸ In a letter to the editor of *The Examiner* of 30th May 1883, the male heads of six prominent families in the Bass Strait defended their good name against an earlier letter, in terms of their willingness to 'work as hard for our bread as any man', less heavy drinking than many communities in Tasmania, care for the environment and honest dealing with shipwrecks.

⁹ For an example of this borrowing, see Sullivan's (2005: 191) description of the people of Broome as exemplars of intercultural mixing of languages, Indigenous rituals, Christianity and modernity, conceptions of belongingness and transmission of culture. Sullivan also argues (p. 92) that this condition is consistent with these peoples' interculturality in the nineteenth-century. Also consider the following description of Arnhem Land by Rothwell (2008b): 'Andrish Saint-Clare ... watches a video just made at Ramingining ... On screen, Yolngu musician and ceremonial leader Bobby Bununggurr is instructing his dancers, in Yolngu language, frequently using terms such as YouTube and hip-hop. ... The dancers are wearing wild paints, drawn straight from Japanese anime and the African photography of Leni Riefenstahl. The soundtrack is a rough-cut Latino tune called *Senor*, *Senor*, which local songman Michael Dhawu heard once on a trip to lower Manhattan and revamped in double time. The video's producer is former Village People drummer Allen Murphy, who works in Arnhem Land.'

‘Chooky Dancers’¹⁰ and Pearson’s (2000: 63) Hope Vale, where young peoples’ desires are made ‘beyond their circumstances in Cape York Peninsula’—with other Australians. It is increasingly rare that Aboriginal families, lifestyles and cultural practices are radically different from others.

This is not to deny that many Aborigines live in remote communities with shared histories and continuing cultures and social structures, but to suggest that they also belong to and identify with multiple intersecting communities and cultures (see Merlan 2005: 167-72), one of which is Australia, and that they connect across the differences to form common interests and shared commitments. Nor is it to deny that the reinvigoration of pre-contact language, art, dance and song are of value, but to problematise the notion that such reinvigoration is needed to recover what has been ‘lost’ via those engagements beyond it for social health. It is to establish the deeply intercultural reality of contemporary Aboriginal lives.

Aboriginal politics confirm that their conception of ‘the good’ includes liberal egalitarian values, and their everyday behaviours confirm their consumerist desires. Aborigines function as both members of a minority and as citizens, in collaborative partnerships (Batty 2005) and as individuals voting, obeying and defending the law, writing letters to the editor, joining the armed services and owning property. Their Aboriginality is one component identification among many, with transitory, contingent priority.

Aborigines are multiple selves, living as ‘citizen-insiders’ at various points on an arc between ‘full assimilation’ and ‘limited particularism’ (Shachar 2001: 6, 32-5), but always simultaneously the same as and different from other Aborigines and other Australians. Their new perceptions sit alongside and do not necessarily eliminate others (see Merlan 1998), but as a result of dialogising interaction, they are no longer, as Maddock (cited in Kukathas 1992: 125; see also Keesing 1989: 33; Tonkinson 1999: 138-39) described earlier people, without self-consciousness or sense of creativity, people merely reproducing or “‘following up” The Dreaming’. They are likely to be, like Native North Americans, self-consciously ‘aware—and acutely—that they are *members of transitional societies*’ (Tomasi

¹⁰ The Chooky Dancers is a group of young men from Ramingining who have choreographed and performed a dance to the tune of Zorba the Greek and, through exposure on the internet, have been invited to perform around the world; see <http://au.truveo.com/Chooky-Dancers-Zorba-shuffle/id/2688171548>

1995: 590, original emphasis). At the same time though, the political agency evident above and in Tasmania (and see Redmond 2005) demonstrates that they have the ‘central human capabilities’ (Nussbaum 2000: 78-80) for personal affiliation, political participation and practical reason to negotiate the everyday tensions that attend their complex state of inter-, intra- and trans-culturality.

Within their intercultural realities, the dialectic of progressive policy and identity politics elevates the hyperreal Aboriginality to super-ordinate status and in the process forecloses on other identities and denies the routine reconciliation of difference between them. Imagined, authorised and made urgent by powerful progressive and indigenous drivers (in part as the solution to contemporary social woes), individuals come to desire the imagined Aboriginality and adopt it in masquerade form. They performatively prove their ‘Aboriginality’¹¹ to themselves and others by asserting their cultural and political credentials (see Tonkinson 1990; 1997: 8). They also prove their solidarity by rejecting ‘white’ diet (Gibson and Pearson 1987; Pearson 2000) and hygiene practices (Mowbray and Senior 2006: 223), resisting education (Folds 1987), abandoning responsibility for health and well-being, allowing their families to become dysfunctional and tolerating domestic violence as “‘understandable” given the history’ (Pearson 2007a: 32). They are encouraged (Pearson 2007a: 32) to believe in the myths of Aboriginality (see Gilbert 1977: 1), behaviourally ‘carry the shroud’ of dispossession, loss and disadvantage (McNamara 1990: 97) and ‘adopt a mentality and outlook of victimhood, to see themselves as victims’ (Pearson 2007a: 32). This masquerade hides their actual integration in wider worlds, denies their ‘inescapably plural identities’ (Sen 2006: xiii) and can ‘literally kill’ (Pearson 2007a: 32).

Aborigines are then, enmeshed in several coexistent Aboriginal cultures—traces of classical, imagined ideal typical and demotic (which folds in and reshapes those two and others)—that constitute overlapping, interweaving, intersecting and interanimating layers of reality and levels of consciousness. In the

¹¹ From this point in the chapter I adopt the formulation ‘Aboriginal’ or ‘Aboriginality’ to indicate the ideal typical or categoric Aboriginality. This is to distinguish it from individuals’ personal Aboriginality, which includes but is not limited to ‘Aboriginality’. Thus, a person who identifies as Aboriginal will identify with the ideal type in some way, and it will form part of his/her self, but because he/she identifies with multiple groups and subject types that mutually inflect each other, his/her whole self may be ‘Aboriginalised’ and so he/she may be considered Aboriginal in a different, more expansive, ambiguously fluid and unknown way than is suggested by the ideal type, particularly as it is used commonsensically. This point is developed further in the chapter.

masquerade of 'Aboriginality', they exaggerate their imagined particularity and separation from others, and through prolonged and repeated performance it can become a reality, infiltrate and come to dominate their demotic reality. Mimicry of imagined behavioural norms can lead to that behaviour becoming normal. Perceived racism can influence interactions and make them actually racist. Enactment of disempowerment can amount to real lack of agency. Mythic learning preferences can produce real discomfort with abstract learning. Fictional separation can have individuals feel and so become unable to relate fully to settler Australians. The *story* of 'Aboriginality' can and does become self-evident, lived and confounding to other realities.

As the masquerade becomes real in these ways, it constitutes for individuals troubling disjunctures between what they are supposed to be, hope and imagine themselves to be, and what they in fact are, though the distinction is muddled by the infiltration of the latter by the former. The 'Aboriginality' they are supposed to be can come to be almost beyond reflection, and they may habitually adopt it in addition or preference to what they are in fact.

This can create a lop-sidedness or asymmetry of realities, though the extent and nature of the asymmetry is variable. In the remote communities, there is a *prima facie* contiguity between traces of the ancestral and the lived, with the imagined 'Aboriginality' a relatively minor element. In these communities people may continue to live their ancestral culture inasmuch as they share a particular history, speak a distinct language, pursue traditional activities and live within the constraints of customary laws, behavioural norms and sanctioned kin structures (see Tonkinson 1999: 138-39; Sutton 2001). Their Aboriginality may be 'framed in terms of mainly local referents' and taken 'totally for granted ... simply not an issue, being as internalised and unobjectified as their belief in the reality of the Dreaming' (Tonkinson 1999: 138). In addition, membership of these communities cannot be considered voluntary and exit is a forbidding obstacle. Realities such as these constitute Kymlicka's 'cultural communities' (1989: 135-50) and 'societal' or 'national' cultures (1995: 79-80) and Pearson's (2007a: 41-4, 54) notion of 'peoplehood', and for both justify claims to perpetual group rights (see Kymlicka 1989: 138-39, 146-50).

Even these communities are not though, unaffected by colonial transformation and postcolonial myth-making (Keesing 1989: 21-2, 24-9), nor are they sequestered off from the wider Australian and national Aboriginal imagined communities (see Tyler 1994; Hinkson and Smith 2005) or from rapid social change in them. In the latter conditions, contemporary institutions, practices and ways of life depart substantially from precolonial equivalents 'at the level of thought, ideology, and political praxis' (Keesing 1989: 28) and it is really only attenuated traces of precolonial culture, abstracted from their traditional symbolic and institutional background, that persist (see Keesing 1989: 32). In fact, there is not even a stable reference or 'zero point' in earlier worlds, which, as in the Broome region (Sullivan 2005: 188, 192) and the Daly River (Hinkson 2005), reveal complexities of cultural intersection, fluidities of membership, multiple, cross-cutting and ambiguous affiliations and individuality similar to today's.

Today, members of remote communities are *also* members of coextensive social, cultural and political communities, including the larger Aboriginal political community, which are not 'cultural communities'. Their coextensive 'Aboriginal' community is 'an aggregate, an external attribution or an analytic category' (Lie, cited in Pearson 2007a: 43). They also voluntarily choose (albeit within the hegemonic normalising conditions) to work, associate and identify with other non-Aboriginal communities, including the national imagined, and incorporate the simulation 'Aboriginality' (see Keesing 1989: 29-32) into their self-perceptions.

In urban communities, Aboriginality is still further distanced from precolonial culture and its contemporary manifestations, is to a greater extent a political artefact of the relationship with non-indigenous worlds and, though the boundaries are fuzzy, discrepant from individuals' mundane life. Here for example, kinship is a private sphere of life (Sutton 2001: 131) and individuals are more self-conscious regarding their objectified cultural past and culture (Tonkinson 1999: 139).¹² Their subjective multiplicity includes a more extensive range of affiliations, and their affiliation with local and national Aboriginal communities is more, with Kukathas (1992: 116-17), that of individuals who associate voluntarily and can more easily, partially and temporarily dissociate. Though they constitute constituencies or 'electorates' (Keesing 1989: 26) for the political entrepreneurs

¹² This is not universally agreed; see for example, Malin 1989.

and so are subject to normative pressure, theirs is a more mutable, ‘comparatively fragile and artificial’ (Rowse 2000b: 1522) form of association than that which prevails in the cultural communities.

A normative ideal type

Thus Aborigines—remote, rural and urban—grow up surrounded by and internalising in different degree ‘Aboriginality’, maintaining more and less knowingly, discrepant levels of consciousness and suspending ‘sliver[s] of doubt’ (Ignatieff 1997: 37) they may have regarding their personal Aboriginality with its departures from the ideal type. Their intercultural lives, affiliations, loyalties, desires and contravening selves persist and inevitably emerge through the overlaying veneer which denies them, revealing the ambiguity rather than neat exclusivity of their particular Aboriginality, and threatening the tenets that ground the multicultural accommodation and Aboriginal political leverage within it. Their lived reality and they, insofar as they express it, become political liabilities.

The leaders who have contributed to the invention of the authoritative tradition and commandeered a representative voice protect the political strategy and their own positions against ambiguity by ensuring that individuals demonstrate their ‘Aboriginality’. Through their control of the relationship with the authorising state, these ‘big men’ (Holcombe 2005: 226, and note 11; Langton 2008b) gain control of resources and political influence sufficient to build cultures of patronage and cronyism (see Rowse 2000b: 1525; Morrissey 2003: 56) which allow them to impose pressure for absolutist and separatist expressions of the imagined culture. They and others, including ‘bleeding heart’ (Lea 2008) and ‘morally vain’ (Pearson 2007a: 30) settler Australians, police the avoidance of errant behaviours, eschewal of excessive selves, rejection of other loyalties and exhibition of indifference, alienation and sometimes hostility that comprise the masquerade.

Those who exhibit other, aberrant, affiliations, intellectual and/or careerist interests, such as good spoken English, material accumulation, concern for a healthy diet, refusal of cultural entreaties (Gibson and Pearson 1987) or simply slack performance of the ideal type, attract petty recrimination. They become objects of derision, suspicion and intimidation, attract accusations of being

‘coconuts’, ‘white men’ or ‘blackfellas for nothing’ and are made to feel unworthy claimants to Aboriginality (see Brady 1995a: 16-17; 1995b: 1490).¹³ Based on the apparent dichotomy between tradition and modernity, they may be accused of contributing to the aporetic loss of culture, and so traitors to their kind.¹⁴

Some, including those whose membership is considered dubious, are subject to disciplinary marginalisation. As Shachar (2001: 50, 55-7) says of Jewish women, Aboriginal women are often expected to accept their symbolic role as iconic markers and carriers of tradition and the structural disempowerment that goes with it. Aboriginal women’s attempts to disagree with, press for change or amelioration of the constraints of artificially inflexible tradition are subject to threatened or actual excommunication from the ‘Indigenous domestic moral economy’ (Peterson and Taylor 2003; see also O’Connor 1984), physical violence and other violations of their human and civil rights (see Jarrett 2006; Nowra 2007). These various sanctions, which Langton (2008b) calls ‘lateral violence’, aggregate to make civil disagreement or appeal to outside agencies null options of redress and dual belongingness extremely difficult.

The covert coalition of progressives and Aboriginal leaders also confound internal and external critique by techniques of discursive resistance (Foucault 1971, 1978, 1981; see Shore and Wright 1997: 10-11) which can, as Sutton (2001: 151) feared might happen to his own, misinterpret words, amputate them from context and turn them into slogans. The leading political entrepreneurs have developed what Ignatieff (1997: 50-60) called, in the context of the Yugoslavian civil war, a ‘narcissistic autism’ which makes them unable to listen to or learn from others, or reflect on the impacts of their actions, and unresponsive to rational

¹³ These processes are similar to those among African-Americans (who are called “‘Oreos”, or Negroes who are black on the outside but white on the inside”) ... “apples”—Native Americans who are red on the outside but white on the inside [and] “bananas”—Asian-Americans who are purportedly yellow on the outside but white on the inside’ (Kennedy 2003: 395).

¹⁴ The social pressure suggested here is similar to that surrounding the stance taken by the (American) National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) in its support for ‘strong race matching’, and the ways in which it has controlled adoption practices. NABSW regards interracial adoption as a form of racial and cultural genocide, fearing that those adopted will be lost to the black community, will lack the ‘bone-deep identification ... with their black forebears and contemporaries’ that is felt to be the condition of communal support and trust (Kennedy 2003: 393-96). The NABSW has manipulated the binaries of race to ‘mau-mau’ supporters of interracial adoption into silence (Kennedy 2003: 397-98). Kennedy (2003: 415) also points out the self-interest in this position. Also see Cooper 2005: 87. Similar fears and political manipulation of Aboriginal community members are evident in Mansell (2004; 2005; n.d.).

argument which disconfirms their faith. They respond to query, critique or criticism, more and less well-founded, with mystification, re-statements of faith and moral bullying (see Pearson 2007a: 30-42; Sculthorpe 2007).¹⁵ This response can cow critique,¹⁶ immunise the discourse to reasoned criticism and lose insights which may well help in the struggle for social health.

The structural capabilities deficit

Thus minor and ambiguous cultural differences become major, nationalist and the basis of internal oppression. The core precepts of the identarian accommodation, from the lop-sided elevation of discursive reality, artificial singularity of identity, binary difference and conditional choice, to the privileging of cultural over individual rights and pressure to maintain the artifice, are institutionalised. Unfortunately, that authorises, sanctions and naturalises social forces which impose a 'structural capabilities deficit' that in different measure compromises individual's capabilities for 'full human functioning' (Nussbaum 2000: 11-15, 70-96).

Those forces press individuals to 'choose' to compromise the capabilities they otherwise have and maintain in a parallel reality or redirect to the management of their obfuscation. The forces lead them to deform their hopes, aspirations, self perceptions and preferences (Nussbaum 2000: 114-15), shrink the range of life options they consider available to them, develop negative attitudes (towards education, care for home or work discipline) and adopt counter-productive or self-destructive habits (maybe including dietary carelessness or substance misuse). The forces can have them surrender to the politics something of their capabilities for personal agency—for their own reasoned decision-making, empathy for, affiliation and associational ease with other citizens, acceptance of responsibility for their own and their children's health and education, and participation in communal debate—that they actually do have. Ultimately, the accommodation can

¹⁵ Sutton (2001: 142) refers to the 'mau-mauing' of critique; some was evident in Chapter Five of this thesis.

¹⁶ In *The Age* newspaper (3/9/08: 11), Aboriginal academic Marcia Langton referred obliquely to these dampening effects when she said that 'the wider Australian community, in trying to avoid racism, in fact perpetrated it with a reluctance to criticise Aboriginal behaviour that would not be tolerated elsewhere'. The reluctance is a product of the social forces associated with the rights-based accommodation of difference, including the Aboriginal politics of colonial guilt.

undermine those capabilities, which obstructs processes of communal change and personal development that are nonetheless underway, and makes less possible the reconciliation that both state and Aboriginal politics notionally seek. The accommodation establishes conditions that induce individuals to sacrifice those capabilities in favour of unreasoned performance of apathy or alienation, and to accept and so perpetuate their undignified second class status as ‘just the way things are’. As have Black Americans (Pearson 2007a: 23), they ‘talk themselves out of the personal freedom won by civil rights activism.’

The burden of Aboriginality for Aborigines

The culture and rights-based accommodation then, releases social forces which deprive Aborigines of a degree of their capacity for self-determination in defining themselves and managing their lives. It imposes on them as individuals a tension between the governing demand for certainty and their actual ambiguity, and between the ideal and their actual real. Though they live an intricate tangled complexity, the forces impose on them a highly geared choice between their culture and citizenship. The forces impose on each individual an exclusive choice between his or herself as avatar of an imagined culture and as modern individual, and thereby make their complexity problematic and inflate the costs of its negotiation.

For the political entrepreneurs who contribute to its creation and are able to manipulate it, the situation is a means to material well-being. They trade on the liberal nostalgia for the ideal type, use the imagined ‘Aboriginality’ as a performative prop, skilfully negotiate the slippages between the stereotype and their actual lives, and gain status and position. There are costs though, even for them. Their performance is forever risky, and they are forever on the edge in establishing that their own evident integration—material comfort, education, equality and social ease—affects neither the legitimacy of their Aboriginality nor that of the political discourse which has it that the double consciousness they exhibit is not possible. They live the dualism and freedom that their politics denies to others, though tied to life-long portrayal of the caricature, duplicity and constant defence of the political agenda which dominates their lives.

Many others however, face the dilemma without the same personal capabilities, and with less than fully conscious thought lock themselves into the archetypical Aborigine masquerade. The effort to sustain the façade and manage their recalcitrant individuality beyond it demands constant vigilance to the possibility of betrayal of either the exterior imagined or interior self, and therefore self-regulation, dissemblance and some confusion, as the imagined infiltrates the lived. Some feel the gap between ‘Aboriginality’ and their own Aboriginality, and the desire to realise the former, agonisingly, imagining themselves to be authentic Aborigines but unable to have it affirmed. Some can be nearly overwhelmed by their felt deficiency and failure. Others find that the community will not allow them to renounce their Aboriginality, even where it is proven to be non-existent.¹⁷ Still others find that the only way to manage the dilemma of retaining association with, and having a private life beyond, community and extended family is through a physical distance calibrated to achieve the balance of contact and separation they want.

The search for distance can be constant though, as family follow (Peterson and Taylor 2003: 112-13), and can produce a state of instability. Movement is an imperfect solution to the structured dilemma. A still less satisfactory resolution to another aspect of the dilemma, the desire for a defining and comforting Aboriginal subalternity, can lead to its actualisation. Individuals may perform subalternity in overt rejection of the national discourse of bourgeois citizenship and achievement, and so deep subalternity—resistance, resentment, alienation, failure and liminal citizenship—can become a defining feature of Aboriginality and secure individuals’ inability to be both Aboriginal and participatory citizens. Some (for example, Tomasi 1995: 590-91) argue that dynamics like these can compromise self-respect; thus it may be that the progressive orthodoxy itself partially causes that marginalisation and difficulties of self-esteem it blames exclusively on colonial dispossession, ethnocentrism and loss of culture.

The indentarian accommodation and the Aboriginal problematic

These Aborigines and their problematic Aboriginalities signal the exhaustion of the utility of governance through the progressive multicultural accommodation.

¹⁷ *The Advocate* 23/3/06: 1-2; 31/5/06: 11.

They are a product of the attempt to govern intersection, simultaneity and ambiguity by imagining it in falsely simple terms—as unique entities, simple stereotypes and neat oppositions—and constructing it in that image by attaching rights to those constructs. But there is no cultural, communal or identity zero point to which such rights can be finally attached, and the accommodation, intended to facilitate the ‘healing’ recovery and free expression of such an Aboriginality and thus lead to more confident engagement with the national society, has had the effect of ossifying what is and always has been intercultural, fluid and ambiguous.

Thus the now hegemonic ‘culturally appropriate’ policy fixes on a monochromatic culture and unrepresentative aspects of the Aboriginal self and so cannot possibly respond to the gamut of Aboriginal needs. Strangely, the more appropriate it is to ‘Aboriginality’, the more *inappropriate* it is to lived Aboriginality, the more it makes complexity debilitating and the more it limits Aborigines’ capabilities to manage their complex circumstances in productive ways. The governing demand for the performance of a normative ‘Aboriginality’ and the subordination of other selves which notionally contravene but actually comprise full Aboriginal personhood, has the unintended consequence of making mundane complexity highly problematic in emotional, subjective, social, cultural and economic terms. It routinely has individuals performatively marginalise those selves which are the result of their daily interaction and actually make possible their integration as equals in the broader social field. The governmental attempt to produce self-regulating difference has thus entrenched not reconciliation and advancement but separation, alienation and inequality.

***Différant* Aboriginalities**

Tasmanian and mainland Aborigines are different from settler-Australians, but not radically so. They share a good deal with, and are ambiguously different from them. Similarly, they share a good deal with each other, if nothing else the discursive ‘Aboriginality’, but their realities are hugely variant: all live differently hybridised mixes of cultures and affiliations and many share more with non-Aboriginal than Aboriginal people. However, the conditions established by the current policy orthodoxy make many uncomfortable in their ambiguous multiplicity and lead them to adopt the counter-productive masquerade.

The previous chapter of this thesis revealed a small number of nonconformist Aboriginal Tasmanians who share the conditions that envelop Aboriginal lived intercultural reality in a discursive reality of difference. They live within the wider community, identify with the idealised Aboriginality and are subjected by normalising governance like others, but unlike others, they refuse the proffered course of essentialist dissemblance. They wish to enjoy their full range of diverse identifications and not to therefore have their membership of their coextensive Aboriginal communities denied them. They do not want to exit those communities in order to be part of communities 'beyond', but want to negotiate the structural impediments and freely express their full subjective range, by identifying and living simultaneously as equal, participatory and still-Aboriginal citizens.

These Tasmanians highlight the response of some mainland indigenous people to the same dynamics. Judged on the basis of their self-presentation in several media, these people include the public figures of Noel Pearson and Lowitja O'Donohue, and others less widely-known but no less important such as Warren Mundine, Martin Nakata, Sue Gordon and Yin Paradies. Of these, Pearson is the exemplar. His Aboriginal culture is not the hegemonic pristine and dichotomous hyperreal version, but a rebuilt syncretic Christian and multi-racial, multi-tribal, multi-linguistic mix (2006a; 2006b; 2006c) that dissolves the taken for granted binary difference. He (2008a) rejects the simplifications of the dominant version of Aboriginal history which has all Aborigines as innocent victims and instead recognises the complexity and diversity of the relationship. He denounces the perversion of tradition for personal gain in micro and larger politics (Gibson and Pearson 1987; 2000: 18-19, 63), and argues for the modification of traditional structures that make private enterprise difficult (2000: 89-91) and violate the bodily integrity of women and children.¹⁸ Indeed his publication of 2000 is suffused with the notion that changes to suit new conditions can come from within tradition and that such changes need not represent a loss of cultural integrity. He identifies complexly, with a Christian Aboriginality, with non-Aboriginal Lutherans and with Australia, and refuses the imputed equation of those departures from the ideal with a lesser quotient of Aboriginality.

¹⁸ *Lateline*, ABC TV 22nd June, 2007.

‘Andrew’, Pearson and the others like them exercise the capabilities that the governed Aborigines redirect, allow to wither or surrender to the politics. They refuse to be unidimensional avatars of ‘Aboriginality’, refuse the opposition and choice between ‘Aboriginality’ and whiteness, equality, citizenship, normalcy, modernity, intellectuality, sensibility and career, and refuse the structural pressure to compromise their capabilities. Instead, they maintain affiliative relations with, concern for, and obligations to, Aboriginal *and* settler Australians, express the full suite of their cultural attachments and subjective selves, commit to education and career and participate in local and wider public debate as citizens. In each respect this is as the governed Aborigines do, but these individuals use their human capabilities to make their multiplicity publicly explicit and so highlight what the governed majority also are and can be, but sublimate in the service of the politics.

Multiplicity and ambiguous difference

Evidently, ‘Aboriginality’ does not cease to be important to the individuals above, nor does it to O’Donohue. ‘Andrew’ dedicated his career to Aboriginal advancement, and Pearson (as above; see 2007a: 54) and O’Donohue (below) agitate politically in its favour, but none are bound to it totally. As participatory citizens, they recognise that ‘Aboriginality’ is but one of many identifications and that other affiliations or lifestyles are not contradictory to, nor do they detract from, their own individual manifestation of Aboriginality. There is no evidence that ‘Andrew’ felt that his Aboriginality was lessened by his attachment to another ethnicity, nor that Pearson feels that his is lessened by his legal qualifications, nor O’Donohue hers by her childhood in a settler Australian home. In fact, they flout the attempt to construct their excessive selves as non (Aboriginally) normative.

When delivering an Anglicare Social Justice lecture, O’Donohue (2003) presented herself as an Aboriginal woman activist and as a refugee advocate, and stated that she is ‘a human being first and an Aborigine second’. In her opening address to the 2003 Adelaide Festival of Ideas¹⁹ she lamented that she is regarded as a representative of Aboriginal people, because that robs her of her individuality. She went to some length to explain that she was not traditional and was more at home in city book shops and coffee shops than camping out in the desert. She

¹⁹ Replayed on *Late Night Live*, ABC Radio National 14th July 2003.

was, she said, an Aboriginal activist but also a woman who had an Aboriginal mother and Irish father, a nurse, neighbour, republican and patron of Australians for Just Refugees. She was aware of, and reconciled the routine contradictions of complexity, joking that she would accept an invitation to be Governor-General despite her republicanism. In a television panel discussion of the 2007 federal government's intervention in Northern Territory communities,²⁰ she submerged those other positions beneath an assertive Aboriginal advocacy.

O'Donohue's movement between different subject positions can only be thought of as contradictory if the universal negotiation of multiple affiliations is considered contradictory. She simply represented her own lived reality which is, as everyone's, of multiplicity and *différance*. The movement indicates how, in different social contexts, aspects of the various subject positions with which she identifies are more or less relevant, singularly or with others, fleetingly or more enduringly, and modified by their intersection.

The same multiplicity and movement is clear in Pearson's many essays, and elucidated by 'Andrew'. While demonstrably identifying with 'Aboriginality', 'Andrew', Pearson, O'Donohue and others maintain a parallel concern for citizenship, wider social cohesion and individuality, and inflect their concern for 'Aboriginality' accordingly. For example, they (Pearson 2007d;²¹ Mundine 2006;²² see also Langton 2008b) at times elevate the individual rights of Aboriginal women or children above Aboriginal group rights and urge that inequitable masculinist customary attitudes and practices be adapted. These are macro-political actions, in which they simultaneously identify and disidentify with 'Aboriginality'. They maintain a similar ambiguity in micro-political actions, as do some others in refusing preferential career advancement on the basis of their 'Aboriginality', and as some Tasmanian students did by deciding against participation in Aboriginal-only sports teams or rejecting tutoring support.

This multiplicity, simultaneity and movement refuses the subjective positioning authoritatively imposed by state policies and Aboriginal politics. These individuals resist binarism and eschew masquerade. Their negotiation of complexity within the dynamics of the progressive/Aboriginal dialectic is hugely

²⁰ *Difference of Opinion*, ABC TV 18th Oct. 2007.

²¹ *The Australian* 17th May 2006: 15.

²² *The Australian* 17th May 2006: 6.

challenging, and difficult to maintain without recourse to the masquerade. The difficulty is to prosecute ambiguity against the authoritative social forces that impress on all a false certainty. By disconfirming hegemonic expectations they are 'unruly', difficult for legislators and administrators to plan for and human service workers to deal with 'appropriately'. Their apparent assimilation may be taken as evidence of white dominance and/or lack of commitment to Aboriginal emancipation, and so their stance is not rewarded with institutionalised support. More often it is portrayed as contributing to the aporetic loss of culture, dilution of identity and therefore loss of rights.

However, their successful management of the conditions is subjectively liberating and of profound importance otherwise. By not observing the normalised separateness or subalternity of 'Aboriginality' they release themselves from the tensions that have come to accompany double consciousness. And unlike the governed Aborigines, whose switching in and out of the masquerade reinforces the categoric Aboriginality and its burden, their noncompliance means that they do not contribute to the perpetuation of the ideal type and the burden of Aboriginality. Rather, they contribute to the dissolution of both. This is the gift of the *différent* to other Aborigines and the nation.

The difficulty of choosing 'otherwise'

In part for the reasons above, and in part the apparent moral rightness and ease of the progressive accommodation, many Aborigines succumb to the pressure for conformity. The Lia Pootah people, who sought the complexity achieved by the *différent* Aborigines, fell back on claims to inherent properties to establish their authenticity and therefore access to special consideration. Prominent Aborigines Pat Dodson and Linda Burney also imperfectly resolve the lop-sidedness between the imagined and the lived. Dodson is reported to 'revel in his personal dualism'²³ but routinely defaults to the hegemonic discourse. When accepting an honorary doctorate from Melbourne University,²⁴ for example, he championed universalist enlightenment values and urged the audience of graduands to accept their responsibility to uphold them. He himself failed that test though, by assuming a

²³ *The Weekend Australian* 18th-19th Oct. 2003, Review: 25.

²⁴ *Land Rights News* Dec. 2006: 23.

natural Aboriginal groupness and essential Aboriginality and mobilising the discourse of oppression and victimhood that ignores the derogation of those same values by Aboriginal leaders. In a subtle way, he contributed to the perpetuation of the conditions which marginalise Aborigines.²⁵

Burney is an educated, professional, urban middle-class woman who does not want to be 'pigeonholed' as just an Aborigine, but who nevertheless cannot quite allow herself to escape it. In a television interview²⁶ she said that both she and Aboriginal interviewer Carla Grant were also women, participatory citizens of the country, part of the humdrum of contemporary reality—'we both shop at supermarkets, ... believe in different things, ... want a better environment ... are worried about global warming'—and should contribute to the discussion of issues in the broader community. She said that she is 'a very strong unionist and knows what it is like to sit in the hospital ward with [her] kids'. Yet, caught in the engrossing governing web of the accommodation, she too upholds the imagined Aboriginality: reclining in her tastefully decorated lounge she says that she is 'not at all comfortable' about the notion of 'an Aboriginal middle-class', as if it betrays some essential quality of Aboriginality.²⁷ In saying so, she too retreated from full liberation, as do many others who are unable to escape the thrall, including the several contributors to Oxenham *et al.* (1999), Lynnette Russell (2002) and Kathleen Butler-McIlwraith (2006).

Post-identity Aboriginalities

Those who manage to achieve the delicate and shifting balance of sameness and difference, and of Aboriginal and national, group and individual interests in these conditions do so by exercising their human capabilities. Though subject to the same attractions and pressures as others, they secure a degree of control over their lives equivalent to that of middle-class heterosexual white Australians. They recognise and work within the structures which produce and constrain them,

²⁵ The two categories of analysis in this thesis, the governed and the liberated, are ideal types and so inadequate to peoples' actual complexity. Thus I have argued that O'Donohue escapes the trap of Aboriginality though she occasionally appears to be caught by it and so does not quite achieve 'savage hybridity' as previously defined; Dodson does not escape the trap and is further from achieving savage hybridity because he commonly defaults to essentialist notions of Aboriginality.

²⁶ *Living Black*, SBS TV 27/4/07.

²⁷ *The Eye* 27th Jan.-9th Feb. 2000: 12.

without ceding their decision-making capacities to those structures. Instead, they use those capacities to moderate the binarism and maintain cooperative relationships across their differences with other Aborigines and Australians. They determine their subjective priorities, temper their Aboriginality and Australianness and come to a simultaneous attachment to both. They (see for instance, Pearson 2007a: 54-5) balance the rights owing them on cultural and individual grounds. Within the bounds imposed by structural determinants, they accept responsibility for their own and their children's lives, health and education. And they express and defend their opinions in Aboriginal and wider communities, and so contribute to debate in both.

These individuals realise uncommon Aboriginalities, different from what is commonsensically considered normal or possible for Aborigines. Contrary to the fear and threat at the base of the accommodation, in being participatory Aboriginal-Australian 'citizen-insiders', their opportunities for socio-cultural and physical health are enhanced. Post-identity departure from the ideal in the shape of integration and double consciousness need not amount to either cultural loss or subjective fragmentation, confusion or anomie. The evidence suggests, instead, a correlation between post-identity and personal development and empowerment. Post-identity implies the transcendence of the identitarianism on which the contemporary multicultural accommodation rests, and the realisation of complex selves. These individuals' capabilities for *différance*—at root reasoned moderation and negotiation—mean that they can reconcile the structural tensions and subjective angst of being Aboriginal in Australia. It is the governed Aborigines, not they, who suffer confusion.

The accommodation of complex Aboriginality

The first section of this chapter articulated the Aboriginal problematic and untangled the social forces which constitute it. It argued the exhaustion of the orthodox rights- and identity-based accommodation, and the problematic consequences of that exhaustion for Aborigines. It also revealed some of the contemporary Aboriginal complexity. The second section confirmed and developed that notion of complexity, identifying 'post-identity' Aboriginalities and explaining how they are realised against the grain of the structurally-imposed

capabilities deficit. It also established that successful negotiation of complexity resolves much of the burden of identarian Aboriginality and can lead to greater engagement of Aborigines as citizens.

These foregoing sections revealed two sides of the coin of Aboriginal complexity. They revealed firstly the intercultural Aboriginal reality that actually occurs in the everyday but is often performatively obfuscated at the instigation of the liberal state and the insistence of Aboriginal political entrepreneurs. They revealed secondly that as a consequence, Aborigines' complexity, which could potentially be negotiated with little angst, is made highly problematic, with negative consequences for them and the nation. This provides an explanation for Aboriginal disadvantage in addition to the orthodox explanation that rests on dispossession, racism, ethnocentrism and assimilation.

This third section of the chapter focuses on key aspects of the complexity—the constitutive relationship with settler Australia, agentic Aboriginal participation, the ambiguous difference and individuality produced within it, and the dialectic that drives Aboriginal fortunes—that are critical to resolving the burden of Aboriginality. Critically, these features starkly contradict the notions of culture, identity, difference, cause, victimhood and aporia that ground the current accommodation, and that, overlaid on lived reality, cause the problematic. Insofar as the *différent* Aborigines successfully contravene key tenets of the accommodation and demonstrate that every element of Aboriginal culture is not integral to its survival, that embrace of the aporia is not cataclysmic, that subalternity does not define Aboriginality, and prove that that contravention can be personally productive, then they indicate the need for and direction of the pursuit of those implications. This third section pursues the implications for public policy approaches that best avoid imposing the burden of Aboriginality and best nurture Aborigines' capabilities to realise their full complexity.

Aboriginal intercultural complexities

At the root of contemporary Aboriginal complexity is the intersection and interpenetration of ancestral aboriginal cultures, their colonial and current manifestations, the hyperreal categoric 'Aboriginal' culture, the cultures of settler Australia, and other global cultures. Every local culture is a messily intertwined

multi-layered, individually-variant and fluid mix of lived Aboriginalities. Aboriginality is ambiguously different from settler Australia, and to the extent that this is so, the Aboriginalisms or 'anthropologisms' (Lea 2008: 82) which dominate current discourse-in-practice are deeply inaccurate to lived reality. Rights are accorded, policies, programs and practices made culturally appropriate to, and Aborigines driven to recover, something which is in many respects a socio-political fantasy.

Also at the root of post-identity Aboriginality is the fact of the abiding relationship with settler Australia, of which contemporary Aboriginality is increasingly an artefact. Aboriginal cultures and selves are as a result, variably, ambiguously different from the settler-Australian majority, and through daily movement across the minor differences and samenesses and habitual negotiation of the occasional contradictions in the relationship, coming to share much with other Australians, sometimes as much as they do with each other. In the encompassing relationship, in which Aborigines affiliate with various intersecting national imagined and local lived, Aboriginal and mainstream communities, they are simultaneously tied to each other and other Australians. The hierarchy of attachment implied in Pearson's adoption of Sen's notions of 'bonding' and 'bridging' identities (see Pearson 2007e), and the distinction (2007a: 44) between those one knows (which in the context of his discussion of peoplehood, implies Aborigines of one's local community) and strangers (all others), is less uniform, unambiguous and stable than he suggests.

Aborigines are as a result neither cultural clones nor ego-less agents of the collective, but individuated beings. Their individuality, including but exceeding identification with the classical and simulation Aboriginalities, is as important as their Aboriginality. Each identifies with a personal Aboriginality inflected by the infinite permutations of their lives. As such, each is neither representative of the imagined or locally-lived Aboriginal culture, nor innately the bearer of supposed Aboriginal truths nor necessarily able to communicate easily with other Aborigines (see Tonkinson 1996: 36; Redmond 2005; Sutton 2001: 131). Each

must and does communicate across differences of Aboriginality as well as gender, age, socio-economic status and more.²⁸

In the relationship also, as this study has shown, Aborigines are collectively and individually agentic. Though coerced and from a deeply unequal position in the colonial period, the relationship has increasingly become one of voluntary association and equality (see Sutton 2001; Pearson 2007a: 50). And though the state remains dominant and the Aboriginal population as a whole marginalised, the cultural rights-based accommodation has delivered a significant measure of moral suasion and political power that has led to the rectification of most of the rights abuses which spurred it (see Pearson 2007a: 21-2, 24, 26). Where the orthodox approach 'reify[ies] abstractions like "society" and "culture" into entities and causal agents' (Keesing 1989: 24, 33; see Sullivan 2005) and removes from consideration individuals, intention and agency, this study has shown Aboriginal agency to be fundamental in the constitution of the contemporary structural arrangements and their circumstances. Furthermore, it has shown that the political entrepreneurs have the full range of human strengths, frailties and foibles in exercising that agency.

Implications for public policy

These dimensions of Aboriginal complexity—intersection, relationship, ambiguity, multiplicity, individuality, agency and dialectical causation—capture key dimensions of Aboriginal circumstances and selves so problematically avoided, denied and overwritten in the current accommodation. They are the complexities that, when realised, the *différent* Aborigines reveal to be liberating. They deeply problematise the political philosophy behind that accommodation. They suggest that I M Young's (1989, 1990) communitarian, and Brian Barry's (2001) universalist approaches to citizenship fail to adequately account respectively, for cultural ambiguity and complex individuality and continuing attachment to cultural groups. They suggest that Kymlicka's (1995: 75, 83, 92-3)

²⁸ Again, this is not to deny that Aborigines around Australia also share a commonality, which includes the imagined Aboriginality, in ways similar to Randall Kennedy's (2003: 395) description of African-American attachment to their imagined categorical culture. It is intended to suggest the universality of sameness/difference and the need to work across difference, including by Aborigines in their interactions with other Aborigines.

belief in autonomous indigenous nationhood as the basis of individual autonomy does not account sufficiently for the lived reality of intertwined and ambiguously different peoplehood, and that Kukathas's (1992: 116-17) notion of freedom of exit is not sufficiently robust to account for the internal illiberal behaviours (which Kukathas largely accepts, see 1992: 117, 127, 133), that result from asymmetric support for cultural rights not adequately balanced by countermanding individual rights.

Furthermore, the comprehensiveness of Aboriginal social, cultural and political coextensivity, fluid bothness and relatively free association with the imagined community and 'Aboriginality' suggest, agreeing with Kukathas (1992: 112), that there is no necessary 'special moral primacy' to Aboriginal political claims to group rights 'in virtue of some natural priority'. These features of contemporary Aboriginality greatly trouble claims to group rights owed on the basis of peoplehood, distinct groupness and primordial culture, and providing for group-centric powers and perpetual support. The notion of peoplehood is not, as Pearson (2007a: 43) hopes, 'self-explanatory'. Claims to such rights in remote Aboriginal communities have some legitimacy that is though, highly problematised by the comprehensiveness of interculturality. The surface appearance of culture as a functionalist entity, on which such rights are based, is increasingly being found to be an historical illusion and an artefact of governance and relationship. Thus, group rights that protect cultural integrity cannot be automatic on theoretical grounds, nor should they be, to the extent that the currently orthodox practice of doing so is found to be so individually unhelpful (see Kukathas 1992: 112).

In a liberal polity committed to the protection of cultural diversity (Galston 1995), there are sound moral and social reasons to support the continuity, integrity and stability of indigenous minority groups through rights to land, language and cultural practice. All Aborigines are however, owed the individual right to personal autonomy (Galston 1995), and must be protected from unreasonable constraint visited upon them in the name of cultural rights. Whilst the integrity of such groups assumes reasonable restraint on individual behaviour, in a deeply intercultural context like the Aboriginal Australian, such restraint must be conditioned by state safeguards that ensure 'the ability of individuals to shift

allegiances and cross boundaries' (Galston 1995: 522) in the continually fluid way they are in fact choosing.

These considerations suggest that improvements in Aboriginal social and physical well-being depend on the acknowledgement of their complexities in public policy and, as Cooper (2005: 88) says, some 'open[ing] up and illuminat[ing of] the range of options' available beyond the binary of universalism and particularism. Further to this, if Aborigines' belongingness is so comprehensively intersected, and they are incorporated in the nation both '*universally*, so that each person is taken to stand in the same direct relation to the state' and '*consociationally*, so that the nature of each person's rights varies with the particular cultural community to which he belongs' (Tomasi 1995: 581, original emphases),²⁹ then they may be best accommodated if policy options are negotiated on the basis of a calculus of their cultural and identity relations in each context. Such a calculus would seek to map the lop-sided bothness, fluidity and contingent partiality of 'soft' exiting (as Rowse 2000b: 1528 describes Kymlicka's 1995: 121 understanding of the exit option; see also 1995: 85)³⁰ that characterises contemporary Aboriginal complexity.

To the extent that such a calculus is possible, it would provide a closer approximation to reality than is currently the case and provide the evidential grounds on which differentiated group rights and nimble policy may be negotiated. The complexities suggest that flexibility is needed in regard to the emphases granted difference (Aboriginality) and sameness (shared citizenship), to groupness and individuality and to the treatment of Aborigines as passive victims and human agents. The resultant approaches may better harmonise individual autonomy (say, the capacity to negotiate simultaneous bothness) and group diversity (and so the continuity of viable groups) than is possible under the current regime, and form the basis of a more flexible *modus vivendi*.

²⁹ Kymlicka's (1989: 137) formulation of the relationship of individual members of cultural minorities to the state is that they are incorporated not universally but consociationally.

³⁰ Kymlicka thinks of exiting as movement within the larger indigenous community; this is similar to Rowse's (2000b: 1528) statement that in Aboriginal Australia: the 'exit option is available in many forms and gradations: moving from one community to another (while remaining within an extended family network), visiting the city from the hinterland for a while, choosing forms of housing that allow one politely to refuse importuning relatives.' It is used here to *also* suggest identification with, and movement around within the wider Australian community.

Clearly this appreciation of complexity poses formidable difficulties for public policy. It cannot, given the unpredictability of the dialectic, the vagaries of the policy development process (as in Lea's 2007 account of health bureaucracy) or 'the sheer perversity of the unintended in history' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 368), provide a policy formula. It can only offer a conceptual framework, a 'vocabulary of social analysis' (Cooper 2005: 88) or a rationale with which to fine-tune the institutional conditions that currently afford rights and policy on the basis of crudely understood difference (with the effect of promoting alienation from the wider society), in order to favour the realisation of post-identity Aboriginalities. The theorisation of complexity here offers a rationale that may guide an attempt to establish conditions more congenial to the nurturance of individuals' capabilities to negotiate the range of subject positions, attitudes and behaviours heretofore denied them as un-Aboriginal.³¹

Any governmental moves to acknowledge the complexity, accept the broad intent and adopt the vocabulary above would manifest in myriad unknown changes to policy, program and practice. The discussion that follows considers some illustrative current examples and proposals in the light of the rationale above and academic and administrative commentary on them, including Sutton's (2001: 125-26, original emphasis) call for '*everything* [to be put] on the table' and Pearson's (2007a: 46-7) recognition of the subtleties of policy needed at the radical centre. It is an exploration of the productive possibilities opened up by the acknowledgement of Aboriginal intercultural complexity, and an attempt to clarify possible contours of a coherent public policy response to it.

At present, the importance of partnership between the state and Aboriginal individuals, communities and organisations, at all levels and phases of policy development, is recognised. However, the base of that partnership in the simplistic tenets of the current accommodation has authorised an unhealthy expectation of uncritical respect for Aboriginal voices, claims and knowledge that has contributed to the failure of the accommodation. The centrality of the relationship with settler Australia requires that that stress on partnership continue, but that partnerships must be based on a critical appreciation of Aboriginal complexity.

³¹ This is not to suggest that recovery of culture is of no value. It may well be useful, but the simplistic way in which culture is interpreted and the primacy that it enjoys in the current accommodation is problematic.

In the first instance, that complexity suggests indigenous heterogeneity, individuality and capacity to agentially imbricate knowledge with power, and to take those features of complexity seriously may have manifold material impacts on partnerships. It may mean for instance, that as Martin Nakata (2007: 214) has acknowledged, the contributions of indigenous advisers, board members, consultants and the like should be treated with less uncritical reverence on the basis of their indigeneity. Genuine acknowledgement of heterogeneity, individuality and agency should mean that 'community consultation' is conducted with all sectors of each community and with the protection of confidentiality and anonymity. It may lead to indigenous participation on boards of management and committees of review being based less on their 'insider' perspective and more on other capacities such as for disinterested critical reflection. It may lead to greater respect for the value of outsiders' neutrality (as in doctors' 'brief interventions'; see Brady 2000). It may mean that policies of 'Aboriginalisation' undertaken in the expectation of enhanced Aboriginal access, communication and ownership begin to favour a mixed staff that involves employees and clients in the routine negotiation of difference in benign conditions.

Recently it has become a rhetorical commonplace to assert that there can be no one-size-fits-all policy solution in Aboriginal affairs (see for example, Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC) 2008: 1), and an orientation to complexity may lead to the operationalisation of this insight through an analysis of the balance of the Aboriginalities extant in each local context and time. Insofar as the nuances of culture and identity can be distinguished, policy may be led to divergent, locally-appropriate, responses. In remote contexts like Yuendumu for example, analysis might suggest that support for cultural practices associated with land, language and family structure is valid. It might lead to private houses being designed to cater for fluid residence or public buildings to cater for avoidance relationships; equally it might find that overcrowding is in part a cultural choice (Rowse 2002: 11), and so lead policy-makers to question the building of new houses on the basis of overcrowding. In Kuranda, such an analysis would find that overcrowding is less a cultural choice and more an imposition (Rowse 2002: 11) and might therefore lead to a building program. In Hobart, where Aboriginality may be found to be more a political construct, and housing needs to be shaped as

much by social class, age, employment or level of education (see Jacobs and Walter n.d.), public policy would respond differently again.

This evidence-based adaptation may be further refined to meet the needs of individuated Aboriginalities. Programs that slavishly cater to culture and self as conceived in the identarian orthodoxy may, even in remote communities, restrict young peoples' increasingly expansive, 'opened up' selves, and the cultivation of those other selves may be achieved through programs of supported exposure to the relationship with settler Australia. The testimonials of individuals who have attended home primary and distant secondary boarding schools (see Rintoul 2008; Ashby 2008)³² suggest that such a balance may be helpful. Public policy may focus on ensuring support for local culture, putting communities and individuals in the way of socio-cultural interaction, supporting their 'soft' exiting and their development of capabilities to negotiate the minor differences that saturate it.

This notion of supported exposure is implicit in the model of socio-economic development advocated by Pearson (2000; 2008c), the Cape York Institute (CYI) (2007), Jon Altman (2001, 2007: 316-17; see also Rothwell 2008a; Tonkinson 2007: 52) and the Aboriginal Employment Covenant (AEP).³³ Employment may be able to build on instances of common culture like the cattle industry (see Ivison 2002: 150; Rothwell 2006b) and take advantage of the opportunities in cultural tourism, mining, forestry and horticultural or pastoral ventures on or near Aboriginal lands.³⁴ Administrative sensitivity to complexity may extend to investment in training infrastructure and support for the movement of workers to and from the site (see CYI 2007: 95-106). Local cultural analysis may also justify the partial modification of land ownership to encourage associated private enterprise,³⁵ and 'support' might mean ensuring the success of participants to

³² *Courier Mail* 22nd Oct. 2007: 17; 'Waverley's Dream' *Message Stick*, ABC TV 9th Jun. 2006.

³³ The AEC, which plans to provide employment for up to 50, 000 Aborigines, is led by Mr Andrew Forrest, CEO of Fortescue Mining, and is supported by Warren Mundine and Noel Pearson, among others (see *The Weekend Australian* 25th-26th Oct.: 1, 8, 18). It is also now supported by the federal government (see http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Release/2008/media_release_0394.cfm).

³⁴ These references are to actual ventures in, respectively, Titjikala, Derby, Mimili and the Tiwi Islands. In respect of tourism see *The Weekend Australian* 18th-19th August 2007: 6; of forestry see Rothwell 2006c; and of mining see O'Keefe 2006; Rothwell 2006d; Michelmores 2008; Pearson 2008b; Macklin 2008.

³⁵ This was an aspect of the Commonwealth Government's 2007 intervention in Northern Territory Aboriginal communities; see Hinkson, M. 2007; also Hughes 2005; Hughes and Warin 2005.

convince others that employment, education or other development ‘beyond’ need not degrade, and may enrich, Aboriginality.

In urban situations, it may be appropriate to acknowledge clients’ imagined Aboriginality as real in order to suit their self-perceptions; this may be the case in mental health services where employing Aboriginal staff or adopting child-friendly practices may leave their self-perceptions untroubled. A more substantive accommodation of ‘Aboriginality’ may not be sensible in the outer suburbs of the major cities (see Yamanouchi 2007: 223-65), where Aboriginal needs in housing, education or health may be almost the same as those of their settler-Australian neighbours, and responses based on gross cultural difference counter-productive.

The logic of this orientation to complexity, which is to support the internal heterogeneity of this minority³⁶ through support for their multiple affiliations, indicates that a mix of nuanced dedicated programs and culturally-sensitive mainstream services will best account for the range of lived Aboriginalities, and will be most productive if seamlessly integrated in order to facilitate individuals’ easy movement between them. The notion of sending interested high school students to mainstream boarding schools expresses this approach. Changes to facilitate complexity may retain dedicated programs and encourage individuals’ gradual movement to integrated mainstream programs to support the group, minimise the sense of separation from the rest of the national society and promote the development of skills of negotiating difference.

The recognition of complexity may lead finally, to modification of the primacy given to the protection of group rights that can lead to derogation of individual rights. This asymmetry is currently evident in the system of permits to enter Aboriginal lands,³⁷ lenient treatment of sexual abusers,³⁸ decisions like those in

³⁶ See Homi Bhabha (1996) regarding the diversity of internally undifferentiated minorities; see also Cooper’s (2005: 87) critique of IM Young’s theory of groupness and social pluralism as a ‘juxtaposition of internally homogeneous, externally bounded blocs’.

³⁷ It has been suggested (Jarrett 2001, 2006; Nowra 2007) that the leaders of some communities have used the permit system to protect themselves from accountability for unjust behaviours. See also *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, 15th-16th Dec. 2001.

³⁸ Starting on 10th December 2007, *The Australian* began reportage of a case in the Cape York community of Aurukun in which none of nine men who pleaded guilty to repeatedly raping a ten year old girl, over a six week period, received a custodial sentence. The Cairns District Court judge said that the girl had probably agreed to the sex. There was also the suggestion (*The Weekend Australian* 4th-5th Oct., 2008: 2) that some of the men were from prominent local families. This case followed a number of others in the Northern Territory; see for example *The Weekend Australian* 16th-17th June, 2007: 1, 4.

the Canadian ‘trapper cases’ (Morse 2007)³⁹ and the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle.⁴⁰ The approach suggested by Aboriginal complexity would tend in the first case toward granting long term permits to those whose work is in the public interest, including journalists, and in the second to a standard interpretation of the law. It would argue that the fostering of Aboriginal children be based on a full examination of the child’s panoply of needs, which may be as well or better met in an ‘Anglo-Australian’ as ‘Aboriginal’ home.⁴¹ A rebalancing of cultural and individual rights in these ways may check the power of cultural gatekeepers and enhance the civil rights of for example, women and young people. It may weaken the grounds on which elites can manipulate group rights and so contribute to the resolution of the problematic burden of Aboriginality.

Post-identity education and training

The possibility of changes to public policy and the emergence of individuals capable of ambiguous bothness depends on a highly socio-culturally informed, reflexive, sceptical, sensitive and competent settler and Aboriginal Australian populace. As Kennedy (2003: 377) says of the prospect of changing the tendency to race matching in the US, deep change depends on ‘the inculcation of a general public opinion’ that will manifest in the attitudes and behaviours of many. It will then, depend on the institutionalisation of the notion of Aboriginal complexity in educational curriculum and pedagogy, institutional structures and organisational practices.

³⁹ In these cases, some indigenous offenders have used the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to claim exemption from the Criminal Code which may have otherwise prohibited their right to possess a firearm. They have argued that as they are dependent on the land, prohibition would constitute cruel and unusual punishment. One such case was successful on the basis that 30% of food or income was derived from hunting and trapping. A post-identity approach would tend to reject the exemption in the interests of other community members’ individual right to bodily integrity where ‘dependency’ is so softly defined.

⁴⁰ The Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, which in different jurisdictions mandates or prefers that Aboriginal children be fostered in Aboriginal families, was a recommendation of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission’s *Bringing Them Home* report (HREOC 1997). See also Dodson, M. 2007: 86-90. Randall Kennedy (2002, 2003) has argued at length the perils of race matching in respect of interracial custody, fostering and adoption in the US.

⁴¹ The girl at the centre of the case in Aurukun (note 38) was for a period after being raped as a seven year old, with the blessing of her family, fostered by a middle-class white family in Cairns. As reported in *The Australian* 11th Dec. 2007: 1-2, she had been going to school, undergoing counselling and progressing well, but was returned to Aurukun on the recommendation of social workers who advised the relevant department that ‘putting an indigenous child with white foster parents was another stolen generation’. On her return she was unsupervised and the rapes occurred.

As with other dimensions of a recent groundswell of thought, scholarly research has foreshadowed and informed one aspect of that project. Perhaps best elaborated in the work of the New London Group (see Cazden *et al.* 1996; Cope and Kalantzis 2000) and Kevin Kumashiro (2000a; 2000b; 2002a; 2002c), that research has focused on conceptualising the universal condition of intersected class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion and nationality, and sought to develop ways of teaching it. Cazden *et al.* (1996) have proposed a ‘pedagogy of multiliteracies’ that would develop students’ metacognitive awareness of complexity by unlearning and exploring the dynamics involved in the production of that which is normal, including dominant subject positions. Kumashiro (2004) advocates ‘paradoxical’ teaching that unlearns that which is taken-for-granted.⁴² Cazden *et al.* (1996: 72; and see Cope and Kalantzis 2000) have also proposed an ‘epistemology of pluralism’ to develop the understandings and skills that are necessary to negotiate overlapping identifications.

These approaches may be extended to Aboriginal complexity. A critical study of post-identity Aboriginalities could use these approaches and the models provided by the *différent* Aborigines to unlearn hegemonic ‘Aboriginality’ and build the skills needed to negotiate the pressures of affiliation across difference. The principles and skills of this negotiation apply to settler and Aboriginal Australian students alike in the broader national relationship, and to Aboriginal students in intra-Aboriginal interactions.

The inculcation of sensitivity to Aboriginal complexity and implementation of changes intent on cultivating post-identity Aboriginalities would depend also on a complementary pre- and in-service training regime for teachers, curriculum developers, teacher educators, policy makers, senior administrators and school communities. Such training may be informed by critique that establishes the often counter-productivity of orthodox anti-oppressive training (see Kumashiro 2000a; 2000b; 2002b; 2002c: 31-50; 2004; 2006), and programs of inter-cultural awareness, sensitivity and competence may adopt the multiliteracies pedagogy.

⁴² Judith Butler (1999: 140) has argued similarly for students to be put in a ‘self-consciously denaturalised position’ in respect of gender, in order that they ‘can see how the appearance of naturalness is itself constituted.’

As in other institutions, the attempt to respond more flexibly to Aboriginal complexity may lead to changes that may reduce the imposition of the capabilities deficit in education. They may lead for example, to a refined ‘Two Ways’ approach that accommodates the messy ambiguities of intersection and individuality, to remote schools teaching issues of local socio-cultural complexity and broaching the adaptation of certain counterproductive cultural practices (see Sutton 2001), the deliberate employment of settler-Australian and non-local Aboriginal teachers to inculcate the critical importance of knowing difference, and/or the opening up of indigenous-only schools to other students.

Review

The above discussion of possibilities in education and policy more generally proceeds from the preceding analysis of the failings of contemporary institutional arrangements and the evidence of their near transcendence by a minority. As indicated, it is also informed by a number of scholarly analyses and administrative innovations that seek in effect to bring the demotic and imagined Aboriginal realities (the ‘practical’ and ‘symbolic’ in the lexicon of recent Australian governments) into closer alignment. Those analyses and innovations are part of an emerging groundswell of opinion (see Hinkson, J. 2008: 4) that is beginning to constitute a challenge to the progressive status quo. The most influential contributions to the groundswell have been those that, like Pearson’s (2000; 2007a) and Sutton’s (2001; 2005; 2008), have transcended the ideological polarities of Right and Left and adopted a politics of savage hybridity, otherwise known as the ‘radical centre’ (Pearson 2007a: 47-58; 2007c). The radical centrist stance recognises that much of the groundswell, as it surfaces in the ‘Responsibility model’ (Sutton 2001: 135) and policies of mutual obligation, shared responsibility and mainstreaming, is inspired by neo-liberalism (Hinkson, J. 2008: 5-9), but it does not allow that heritage to entirely invalidate those proposals. It has been argued in this chapter that each of those aspects of the model can be appropriate to and beneficial for Aboriginal individuals. For example, given the destabilisation of the equation of Western education with cultural loss, both boarding schools and school autonomy within the state system

(Novak 2006; Hughes 2008) have a legitimate place in any larger response to complexity.

However, a radical centrist stance is subject to resistance from commanding ideologies (Pearson 2007a: 46, 50), which frustrates the potential for productive change to emerge from the groundswell. Progressive and Aboriginal resistance coalesces around the moral rightness of affirmative action, the thrall of the Aboriginal exotic, the horror of the aporia and the difficulty of comprehending the complexity evident in this study. The resistance, also an artefact of elite political and personal self-interest, has presented a formidable barrier to the development of theory, policy, program and modes of service delivery beyond the understandings which ground the current orthodoxy. Pat Dodson voiced a response that is consistent with that of many Aboriginal political entrepreneurs when he summarily rejected the suggestion that a majority of Aborigines have ‘integrate[d] satisfactorily into the country’⁴³ on the grounds that it ‘really denies the uniqueness of who the indigenous people are’. Many others are vulnerable to the ‘political correctness crap’⁴⁴ that is part of the political manipulation of colonial guilt (see Pearson 2007a), unable to make sense of the tautology and mystification that pervades it (see Mowbray and Senior 2006) and unwilling to abandon the security of old ideas.

The progressivist response to policy movement beyond the status quo is illustrated in the collection edited by Altman and Hinkson (2007), in which academic and activist voices came together to swiftly denounce the Commonwealth Government’s intervention in Northern Territory Aboriginal communities. Mansell (2007) argued that in its referencing of individualism and personal responsibility the intervention was monolithically neo-liberal, therefore reprised ‘assimilatory’ policies and therefore led inexorably to the death of Aboriginal Australia. These arguments were, as Rothwell (2008a: 16) wrote, ‘often covertly targeted against Pearson’ (see for example, Behrendt 2007: 15) and

⁴³ This suggestion was made by the retiring Australian Governor-General; both it and Dodson’s rejection were reported in *The Age* 1/9/08: 1.

⁴⁴ In *The Australian* newspaper (4th Mar. 2008: 4), Warren Mundine called for the ditching of the ‘politically correct policy and romanticism holding back Aboriginal affairs’, saying that ‘[we] have to get rid of this PC crap and get away from all this romantic bullshit about Aboriginal culture’.

formed the 'basso continuo' of the book. John Hinkson (2008: 5-9) took the same approach to neo-liberalism in his editorial piece for the journal *Arena*.

This reaction is widespread and accompanied by the stubborn persistence of the crude notions of culture and difference which led the Royal Commission to imagine the double bind, educators to theorise distinct learning styles (Hughes 1981, 1984) and cultural domains (Harris 1990), and political theorists (see Tully 1995) to divine a continuing thread of essential indigeneity through long-term cultural intersection. This is the case in cross-cultural training (see Bean 2006; Lea 2008: 82, 98-100; PHERP Indigenous Public Health Capacity Development Project Reference Group 2008).⁴⁵ Indeed the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC), a body comprised of fifteen indigenous academics from around Australia, has breathed new life into such notions by proposing (IHEAC 2008: 2) to national government that 'indigenous knowledge systems and intellectual traditions have culturally distinct knowledge bases, research methodologies, evidentiary systems and values. They are complete systems in their own right.'

The confounding inertia of the status quo in Aboriginal affairs is evident in the attempt made by The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) in the early 2000s to have its Aboriginal Gallery more accurately 'represent Tasmanian Aboriginality as a postcolonial phenomenon with a diverse and politicised past and future' (Ratcliffe 2006: iv). In earlier manifestations the display has served first colonialist and later nationalist hegemonic ends. As Ratcliffe (2006: viii-x and *passim*) explains, it has privileged the dominant Western voice and interpretive framework and proposed primitivist antinomies that have established certainty and control by denying the lived realities of postcolonial heterogeneity, ambiguity and cross-cultural fluidity.

⁴⁵ In the year prior to submission of this thesis I taught a tertiary level, semester-long cultural competency course; I also attended, with perhaps forty other members of staff from various faculties, a university-sponsored cultural awareness workshop. Both unit and workshop romanticised classical culture, simplified causation and perpetuated exceptionalism. Other than in asides, neither touched on the complexities of the relationship with the nation, individuality or multiplicity, nor the multiplicity of factors involved in contemporary marginalisation. In the final session of the workshop, participants were asked to suggest responses and overwhelmingly they focused on greater investment in the orthodox progressive approach: to listen more to, collaborate more with, and follow the lead of Aborigines, provide more resources for their development, and celebrate their culture and so build their self-esteem and engage them in wider society.

Informed by recent museological thinking, TMAG sought to develop counter-hegemonic representations of Aboriginality. However, guided predominantly by Bass Strait Islanders (Ratcliffe 2006: 32-33, 37),⁴⁶ the display does not succeed and instead celebrates a singular Tasmanian people and community, singular (and as if originary) Palawa language and mythicised primitivist culture.⁴⁷ Visually and textually dominated by Bass Strait Islanders, it confirms the Islanders *as* the Tasmanians and marginalises others. Moreover, aside from some gestures to cultural variation and contemporary context, it constitutes their Aboriginality as static heritage and is devoid of the retrospective invention, credentialisation and contestation that has been, as we have seen, central to its achievement. Thus, instead of challenging the status quo by engaging with alternative perceptions of Aboriginality, the new display reprises earlier displays' exclusion of Aboriginal voices and contribution to the status quo. It contributes to the retardation of change.

This Tasmanian failure to transcend the status quo is mirrored elsewhere. The Northern Territory Law Reform Commission (NTLRC) for instance, has sought for many years (NTLRC n.d.: 8; 15, note 9; 26) to find ways of reconciling customary and general Australian law, particularly in remote communities. Yet because it was unable to escape a number of crude culturalist assumptions in a recent enquiry it made virtually no progress toward that goal. In its report it acknowledged complexity (pp. 14, 36) and proposed collaborative (p. 28) and accountable (p. 31) structures, but married these developments to notions of distinct domains (pp. 14-15, 21, 29), individuals' metonymic representativeness (p. 16) and cultural security allowing greater engagement in national society (p. 18). By virtue of the taken-for-grantedness of these ideas, reinforced by Aboriginal advocacy (pp. 19, 23, 31), the review found it difficult to conceive of limits to Aboriginal cultural rights. This was despite the Committee knowing that the notion of Aboriginal tradition is imprecise (p. 37) and 'can break down' (p. 22), that there are fewer 'people ... who could be called elders' (p. 36) and that aspects of traditional marriage (pp. 23-24) and payback (pp. 25-26) expressly

⁴⁶ The list of advisory committee members is on display in the new Gallery.

⁴⁷ An instance is the statement by a prominent Bass Strait Islander to the effect that '[w]e never fought over territory. The land had created the boundaries not us. The law of the land and our responsibilities ... were laid down by the land itself.'

contravene national law and imply the loss of some group members' rights and freedoms (pp. 15, 19, 22). Indeed, the Committee sought to justify those illiberal practices by arguing that consent is voluntary and that community members have the option of exit (pp. 19-20). It concluded with a plea for more consultation (pp. 24, 27).

Innumerable such cases fudge the conundrums and perpetuate the environment found in this study to be ultimately so unkind to Aborigines. However, the theorisation of Aboriginal complexity in this study makes available a rationale that can guide movement through and beyond the impasse. It confirms that Aborigines are part of modern Australia, as capable as others of complex individuality and therefore able to integrate without that integration necessarily degrading their uniqueness. As many others, Dodson himself proves that it is possible to do so. As suggested in the earlier discussion and the two cases above, the theorisation provides a coherent rationale that can inform the development of the thoughtful, robust and supple public policy necessary to resolve the gridlock in the Aboriginal-state relationship that results from group rights.

Conclusion

This discussion of the implications of the research conducted in this study recognises that it has been useful for a time and in some senses for government to afford rights and design programs on the basis of relatively undifferentiated cultural difference, but argues that it is eventually productive for neither the Aboriginal objects of the policy nor the national polity. By concocting an exclusionary choice between cultural identity and citizenship, the attempt stifles subtle differential citizenships that are nascent in the everyday. The discussion has proposed that it is vital that the policy framework that has that effect be adjusted in order to accommodate Aborigines' complex realities.

It has suggested some guiding principles for an adjustment, focused on refining key tenets of the old accommodation and ending the capabilities deficit it induces. It suggests that any such adjustment should promote more widespread realisation of Aboriginal *différance* by curbing the governing urge to amenable difference and developing individuals' capacities to reconcile their minor, artificially inflated differences. Such an approach is suggested by, among others,

Yuval-Davis's notion of 'rootedness' and 'shiftingness' (Yuval-Davis 1997b) and Cowan's recognition of the value to Macedonians of their ambiguity (Cowan and Brown 2000: 6). Further developed in concert with those notions, and institutionalised, the proposals made above have the potential to nurture differentiated Aboriginal citizenships and invigorate the relationship between Aborigines and the national society, with productive outcomes for Aboriginal individuals and communities and the nation itself. These reconciliatory ends are not possible while essentialist difference prevails, but *are* possible with the conception of ambiguous difference suggested here.

In their attempt to support parallel and intertwining belongingnesses, the proposals are also highly germane to the wider liberal attempt to build cohesive societies in which minority groups may retain their differences of gender, class, religion, sexuality, race/ethnicity and the like intact if altered, and their members may be also included as equals in the wider society. Though still in its infancy, the process of developing juridical and social equality across difference is made achievable through the building of commitment to a commonality—each individual's shared humanity—and a civic compact—to moderate one's own and tolerate others' difference. This is the larger 'liberal thought experiment' (Ignatieff 1997: 66) within which this project and the accommodation of Aboriginal difference fit, and to which, with further development, it can make a contribution.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interviewees (including date of interview)

Aboriginal Students

AS1, 6/9/01	Chris, NA, male, interested in the army, as a chef
AS2, 6/9/01	Ella, female, FC-S, considering journalism
AS3, 27/9/01	Anne, female, BSI, interested in office administration
AS4, 4/10/01	Nick, male, NA, will do a university science course
AS5, 4/10/01	Adrienne, female, NA, wants to be an electrician
AS6, 4/10/01	Talana, Jan and Alice, female, FC-S, caring professions
AS7, 27/9/01	Kim, female, CBI, training as a chef
AS8, 6/11/01	Melissa, female, FC-S
AS9, 6/11/01	Amanda, female, FC-S
AS10, 7/11/01	Sandra, female, FC-S
AS11, 7/11/01	Norman, male, FC-S
AS12, 7/11/01	Rebecca, female, FC-S
AS13, 8/11/01	Alecia, female, FC-S
AS14, 8/11/01	Kara, female, FC-S
AS15, 9/11/01	Alex and Jarrad, male, FC-S
AS16, 13/5/02	Ch, female, Flinders Island, office administration
AS17, 14/5/02	Theresa, female, early twenties, single mother, mainland, interested in medicine
AS18, 15/5/02	June, female, Flinders Island
AS19, 20/5/02	Paul, male, BSI, educated interstate but returned to complete senior secondary school
AS20, 21/5/02	Ruth, female, BSI, early twenties
AS21, 21/5/02	Julie, female, DD-B
AS22, 22/5/02	Elsbeth, female, DD-B

Aboriginal Adults

AA1, 12/7/02	Gary, male, mid-forties, FC-S, Hobart, manual worker and mature age university student
AA2, 27/9/02	Gerry, male, mid-forties, DD-B, activist member of TAC, Hobart, tertiary educated, government administrator
AA3, 1/8/02	Nick, male, early forties, BSI, secondary educated, Hobart/Cape Barren, creative artist
AA4, 16/8/02	Bruce, male, early-fifties, BSI, secondary educated, Hobart area, manager in the non-government sector
AA5, 17/10/02	Gill, female, mid-forties, BSI, active member of TAC, Hobart, public servant
AA6, 13/9/02	Carol, female, mid-forties, BSI, government/non-government sector administrator
AA7, 30/10/02	Andrew, male, late-fifties, DD-B, Hobart, education
AA8, 9/11/01	Christine, female, late-thirties, FC-S, secondary educated, housewife and office worker
AA9, 22/11/02	Tara, female, late-twenties, FC-S, tertiary educated

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule 1, Aboriginal students

Your observed actions in school, explanations

- associations (previous school, friendships, in and out of class), incidents, attitudes, dress, follow up on earlier comments

Describe yourself

- biography (place, family, siblings, parents, grandparents,...)
- Aboriginality (others in images, wider community expectations, place in Tasmanian community, media personalities, good/bad Aborigine,...)
- other affiliations or aspects or sources of self (eg youth, gender, Australian,...)
- opinions of current events (eg ethnic youth gangs, Tampa, Reconciliation...)
- future plans (schooling, work,...)

Perceptions of teachers, classes, subjects, peer groups, friendships

- their model student (features, examples,...)
- their perceptions / expectations of you, goals for you, how accurate, how you measure up
- comments on school arrangements, routine, curriculum, celebrations, trips away, ASSPA ...
- school social issues (gay, gender,...); school management of and responses to them
- problems experienced with any teachers or classes (details, possible explanations,...)
- treatment of Aboriginal issues, any focus on you as expert ...

School influence on you

- teachers or subjects (favourites, dedicated teachers,...)
- ASSPA, other Aboriginal students

Life outside school and influences on you

- after school, weekend activities (locality, friends, activities,...)
- parents and home (history, locality, expectations, activities, house and belongings, trouble,...)
- wider Aboriginal community (relationship with, opinions of,...)
- media (images, shows, emotional responses, stereotypical and different types of Aborigine,...)
- other government services (housing, police, Centrelink,...)

Appendix 3: Interview Schedule 2, Aboriginal Adults

Introduction

- explanation of the issue and project

Schooling

- personal experience as child
- teacher and school expectations, assumptions
- special treatment, programs
- personal responses
- later education, eg tertiary: progress, experience, impact on self

Personal biography and other institutions

- sense of Aboriginality: initial awareness, self-perception
- experiences with other government agencies and explanations
- similarities with and differences from schooling
- common and particular organisational responses to self and other Aboriginal people

Other influences

- Aboriginal community: expectations, exhortations, traditions
- other experiences, incl. mainstream memberships, workplace interactions, relationships
- current events

Stresses and tensions of each and cumulatively

- match up or otherwise of both, instances, associated tensions
- difficulties associated with personal identity, pressures to choose between
- impacts of institutions in this regard, eg school, employment

Management/negotiation strategies (specific and general)

- attempted resolutions, routine strategies
- success or otherwise

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